

COMPASS

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THE HUNGARIAN «SOVIET REPUBLIC» OF 1919



"It went too smoothly, I couldn't go to sleep. I spent the whole night figuring out where our error lay, for there must be an error somewhere. The whole thing was too smooth; we will stumble upon it but, I fear, only when it is too late".
(Béla Kun, cited in: H. Gruber (Ed.): "International Communism in the Era of Lenin"; New York; 1972; p. 141).

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For:

THE COMMUNIST LEAGUE

1

THE HUNGARIAN "SOVIET REPUBLIC"

OF 1919

INTRODUCTION

For 133 days, from March 21st. to August 1st., 1919, a "Soviet Republic" existed in Hungary.

This "Soviet Republic" was defined as a state in which "the working class held political power", as "the dictatorship of the proletariat":

"In establishing the Soviet Republic the proletariat has taken into its hands ... full power for the purpose of doing away with the capitalistic order and the rule of the bourgeoisie and putting in its place the socialistic system of production and society. The dictatorship of the proletariat is ... a means to the destruction of all exploitation and class rule".

(Constitution of Hungarian Soviet Republic, in: H. Gruber (Ed.): "International Communism in the Era of Lenin"; New York; 1972; p. 123).

and the process by which the "Soviet Republic" was established was characterised as a "peaceful socialist revolution".

"Without any bloodshed, power passed into the hands of the working class".
(M. Rákosi: Statement at Trial, 1935, in: "The Imprisonment and Defence of Mátyás Rákosi"; London; 1954; p. 139).

"In Hungary, for the first time in the world, the socialist revolution had been won and the dictatorship of the proletariat set up in a peaceful manner".

(J. Kende, L. Gecsényi and A. Steinbach: "Revolution in Hungary: 1918 and 1919"; London; 1968; p. 22).

"The seizure of power had been carried out peacefully. ... No opposition or protest was made even by those sections of society which did not agree with the internal political programme of socialist transformation".

(Z.L. Nagy: "Revolution in Hungary (1918-1919)", in: E. Pamlényi (Ed.): "A History of Hungary"; London; 1975; p. 434-5).

"Judge: Was there no resistance?"

Rákosi: Not the least resistance. ...

No one resisted. It is utterly incredible".

(Trial of the Hungarian Society, 1935, in: "The Imprisonment and Defence of Mátyás Rákosi"; London; 1954; p. 98, 104).

It is, however, a fundamental principle of Marxism-Leninism that a ruling capitalist class will use every means within its power to prevent the seizure of political power by the working class and the resultant elimination of exploitation:

"The historical truth is that in every profound revolution, the prolonged, stubborn, desperate resistance of the exploiters ... is the rule. Never, except in the sentimental phantasies of the sentimental simpleton Kautsky, will the exploiters submit to the decision of the exploited majority without making use of their advantages in a last desperate battle, or series of battles".

(V.I. Lenin: "The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky", in: "Selected Works", Volume 7; London; 1946; p. 140).

Marxist-Leninists recognise that it is possible for a working class to seize political power peacefully, without resistance on the part of the capitalist class, in certain exceptional circumstances - namely, when the capitalist class possesses no effective state machinery of force with which to resist. It is sometimes argued that this was the situation in Hungary in March 1919, that the Hungarian national capitalist class, having only won its

freedom from Austrian domination in July 1918, had not had time to build up an effective state machinery of force of its own by the following March.

What cannot be explained on the basis of this theory, however, is the fact that the ruling capitalist class actually released the leaders of the Communist Party of Hungary from prison and invited them, in conjunction with the leaders of the Social Democratic Party, to set up a "Soviet Republic". As the then President of the Republic, Count Mihály Károlyi, relates in his memoirs:

"I therefore proposed that ... I would charge the Social Democrats, in conjunction with the Communists, to form a new Government; this proposal was unanimously accepted".

(M. Károlyi: "Memoirs: Faith without Illusion"; London; 1956; p. 154).

This strange fact is sometimes "explained" on the basis of the theory that capitalism in Hungary in March 1919, only eight months after the Hungarian National capitalist class had gained power, was already "bankrupt" and the ruling class in a state of "collapse";

"In this situation the proletariat enters the stage, summoned by Count Károlyi and the Hungarian bourgeoisie itself. ...

The new revolution in Hungary, replacing bourgeois democracy with the Soviet Government, ... is not the result of a struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, in which the latter has been vanquished, but is simply the result of the fact that the Hungarian bourgeoisie ... kicked the bucket. ...

The proletariat gains power as a result of the collapse of the bourgeoisie".

(P. Levi: Article in: "Freiheit" (Freedom), March 24th. 1919, cited in: H. Gruber (Ed.): *ibid.*; p. 144, 145).

Although this theory is Luxemburgist, and not Marxist-Leninist, even Lenin - despite his misgivings about the character of the Hungarian "socialist revolution", misgivings which are documented in the text which follows - felt compelled by the facts to adopt this theory:

"A most radical, democratic and compromising bourgeoisie realised that at a moment of extreme crisis, ... a Soviet government is a historical necessity, that in such a country there can be no government but a Soviet government, the dictatorship of the proletariat".
(V.I. Lenin: Speech Closing the 8th. Congress of the RCP, March 23rd., 1919, in: "Collected Works", Volume 29; Moscow; 1974; p. 224).

"The bourgeoisie voluntarily surrendered power to the Communists of Hungary. The bourgeoisie demonstrated to the whole world that when a grave crisis supervenes, ... the bourgeoisie is unable to govern".
(V.I. Lenin: Communication on the Radio Negotiations with Béla Kun, March 1919, in: *ibid.*; p. 243).

"In Hungary the revolution was most unusual in form. The Hungarian Kerensky, who over there is called Károlyi, voluntarily resigned, and the Hungarian compromisers - the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries - realised that they must go to the prison where our Hungarian comrade Béla Kun ... was confined. They went to him and said: 'You must take power!'. The bourgeois government resigned. ... This is a revolution of world-historical importance. ...

The Hungarian bourgeoisie admitted to the world that it had resigned voluntarily and that the only power in the world capable of guiding the nation in a moment of crisis was Soviet power".

(V.I. Lenin: Report on the Domestic and Foreign Situation of the Soviet Republic, Extraordinary Meeting of Moscow Soviet, April 3rd, 1919; in *ibid.*; p. 269, 270).

It follows that the manner in which the Hungarian "Soviet Republic" was established in March 1919 can be explained only on the basis of one of the following theories:

Either the Marxist-Leninist principle that the capitalist class will use every means in its power to prevent the seizure of power by the working class - a principle which has been found to be valid everywhere else and at all other times - was invalid in Hungary in March 1919;

or the establishment of the Hungarian "Soviet Republic" was not the genuine seizure of power by the working class, that is, the Hungarian "Soviet Republic" was not the genuine dictatorship of the working class, but a false facade erected by the Hungarian national capitalist class to serve some purpose of its own.

The analysis which follows demonstrates that the second theory is the correct one.

On March 20th., 1919 the Hungarian national capitalist class, and its government headed by President Mihály Károlyi, were faced with a grave dilemma. On that day there was received in Budapest an ultimatum from the victorious Allied Powers which amounted to the dismemberment, not merely of the territory of the former multi-national Kingdom of Hungary, but of ethnic Hungarian territory.

They were unwilling to accept this ultimatum. Indeed,

"... there was not a single Hungarian politician willing to fulfil this demand of the Great Powers".

(Z.L. Nagy: "Revolution in Hungary (1918-1919)", in: E. Pamlényi (Ed.): "A History of Hungary"; London; 1975; p. 433).

But, on the other hand, they were unwilling to reject it, since this would almost certainly mean war with, and occupation by, the military forces of the Allied Powers, leading, in all probability, to the enforced loss of even more Hungarian ethnic territory.

They therefore embarked on a cunning plan, a plan to frighten the Allied Powers with "the spectre of Bolshevism". On March 21st., 1919 they arranged for the establishment of a "Soviet Republic" in Hungary with the declared aim of bringing about a military alliance with Soviet Russia.

Already, on March 19th., Károlyi had

"... informed the cabinet that in the judgment of the government's military experts it would be only a matter of weeks before the Russian Red Army would break through the Romanian lines and reach the eastern boundaries of Hungary".

(R.L. Tökés: "Béla Kun and the Hungarian Soviet Republic"; New York; 1967; p. 132).

The representatives of the "overthrown" Hungarian national capitalist class, whose principal political party was the Social Democratic Party, then made it clear that the "socialist revolution" had been "caused by the Allied ultimatum".

As the Minister of Nationalities in the Károlyi regime, Oszkár Jászi, expressed it:

"The Communist revolution was the immediate result of the Vix note. ...

It is impossible to deny the immediate connexion of cause and effect between the Vix note and this dictatorship". (O. Jászi: "Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Hungary"; New York; 1969; p. 97, 98).

- an opinion which was obligingly confirmed by the Chairman of the Revolutionary Governing Council, Sándor Garbai:

"What is happening now is happening because the Entente has forced events into this channel".

(S. Garbai: cited by: O. Jászi: *ibid.*; p. 98).

and by its People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Béla Kun:

"The reply of the Hungarian people to the ultimatum of the Entente demanding the immediate and final surrender of Hungarian territory to the Romanian oligarchy is the proclamation of a Dictatorship of the Proletariat"; (B. Kun: Radio Message to the Workers of the World, March 23rd., 1919, in: O. Jászi, *ibid.*; p. 98).

The representatives of the capitalist class added that public opinion against the Allied demands was "so overwhelmingly hostile" that they could only "rescue" Hungary from "the dictatorship of the proletariat" if these demands were "greatly modified to Hungary's advantage".

The political atmosphere in Hungary at the time - where workers were setting up Councils modelled on the lines of the Soviets in Russia and where in many areas the landless peasants were arbitrarily seizing the large estates - played an important role in disguising the false facade of the "Soviet Republic".

But that the officials of the national capitalist regime did not take the "Soviet Republic" seriously is testified to by Mátyás Rákosi, relating at his trial in 1935 the events which followed his release from prison on March 21st., 1919:

"I was taken to the Under-Secretary of State ... who immediately introduced himself as follows: 'My name is Comrade Méhely. (Laughter in court). I knew that he had been secretary of the National Association of Industrialists, and I was surprised to find that he was a comrade too. But immediately after, all the Under-Secretaries of State and the Counsellors rushed to see me, and they all introduced themselves as 'comrades'". (M. Rákosi: Statement at Trial, 1935, in: "The Imprisonment and Defence of Mátyás Rákosi"; London; 1954; p. 103).

But, however, the political representatives of the national capitalist class may have sought to disguise the spurious character of the "Soviet Republic", the political representatives of the landlord class saw it clearly as a mere manoeuvre designed to frighten the Allied Powers into withdrawing their demands for the dismemberment of the Hungarian state. Rákosi quotes from a book entitled "Data on the Szeged Counter-Revolution" by Béla Keleman, who was Minister of the Interior in the counter revolutionary "National Government" set up at Szeged during the period of existence of the "Soviet Republic":

"The view was fairly widespread that the proclamation of the Soviet Republic was only a means of compulsion to force the Entente to relinquish the dismemberment of Hungary".

(B. Keleman: "Data On the Szeged Counter-Revolution", in: M. Rákosi; Statement at Trial, 1935, in: *ibid.*; p. 139).

The plan was by no means as risky as it sounds, for it was conditional upon the imprisoned leaders of the Communist Party accepting the dissolution of their party and its "merger" with the Social Democratic Party into a "Socialist Party of Hungary - in fact, the submerging of the Communists into a party more than a hundred times the size of their own party. The Hungarian "Soviet Republic" was in fact dominated and controlled by the "former" Social Democratic Party, whose members held the principal state posts throughout the country:

"The greatest error committed by the Hungarian workers' revolution of 1919 ... consisted of ... the fact that the important posts in the revolutionary regime were occupied by Social Democratic leaders who sabotaged and betrayed our cause".

(M. Rákosi: Statement at Trial, July 1926, in: *ibid.*; p. 42).

"Owing to the fact that the entire Social Democratic Party had accepted the agreement with the Communist Party, and because as a result these men (the social-democrats - Ed.) were in a position to present themselves to their discontented followers as protagonists of the proletarian revolution, it was impossible to eliminate them. Therefore the proclamation of the dictatorship of the proletariat had consolidated these men in their positions. It permitted them to stay in their positions and to carry out their struggle against the dictatorship of the proletariat, just as they had done before its proclamation

"The bourgeoisie ... succeeded in maintaining itself in all the key positions (of the 'Soviet Republic' - Ed.)".

(M. Rákosi: Statement at Trial, 1935, in: *ibid.*; p. 141-2).

As the social-democratic leader Vilmos Böhm expressed it later:

"We stayed on the commanding bridge of the ship which was battered by the storm, to save with one great effort what could be saved".

(V. Böhm: "Két forradalom tuzében" (In the Crossfire of Two Revolutions); Vienna; 1923; p. 261).

Further, any risk that the spurious "Soviet Republic" might become transformed into a genuine one, and consolidate itself, was nullified by the fact that the programmes of both the Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party rejected any distribution of the land of the large estates among the peasantry, thus dooming the "Soviet Republic" to alienate the land-hungry rural poor:

"Another capital error was the fact that, unfortunately, we ... failed to distribute the large estates to the landless peasants. . . .

The Communist Party of Hungary realises that it committed a grave error when, at the time of the dictatorship, it did not distribute the land".

(M. Rákosi: Statement at Trial, July 1926, in: "The Imprisonment and Defence of Mátyás Rákosi"; London; 1954; p. 42, 53).

"Woe to the government which has the peasantry against it. It leads but a shadowy existence".

(B. Szántó: "The Real Reason for the Collapse of the Hungarian Soviet Republic", in: "Die Internationale" (The International), Volume 1, No. 15/16; November 1st., 1919, in: H. Gruber (Ed.): "International Communism in the Era of Lenin"; New York; 1972; p. 135).

If the ploy was successful in securing satisfactorily modified armistice terms from the Allied Powers, the "Soviet Republic" could then be dismantled at a convenient moment.

From the point of view of its authors, the Hungarian national capitalist class, the plan proved very successful. Within a week of the "socialist revolution" the Peace Conference in Versailles despatched to Budapest the mission which the Károlyi regime had striven unsuccessfully to obtain, bearing with it new terms which Károlyi himself described as "amazingly favourable".

The representatives of the national capitalist class within the "Soviet regime", the former leaders of the Social Democratic Party, then turned against both the Communists and the regime - bringing about the resignation of the "Revolutionary Governing Council" and the end of the "Soviet Republic" on August 1st., 1919.

Some of the lessons which Marxist-Leninists drew from the collapse of the "Soviet Republic" in Hungary were formulated in the following year in the Conditions of Affiliation to the Communist International, drafted by Lenin, which were adopted by the Second Congress of the CI:

"Not a single Communist must forget the lessons of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. The Hungarian proletariat had to pay dearly for the amalgamation of the Hungarian Communists with the reformists. ...

Every organisation that wishes to affiliate to the Communist International must in a planned and systematic manner remove from all positions in the working class movement that are at all responsible ... reformists and adherents of the 'Centre' and put in their places reliable Communists. ...

The working class cannot consolidate its victory unless it has behind it at least a section of the agricultural labourers and the poor peasants, and unless it has by its policy neutralised a section of the rest of the rural population. In the present epoch, Communist work in the rural districts assumes first-class importance. ...

Parties desiring to affiliate to the Communist International must recognise the necessity of a complete and absolute rupture with reformism and the policy of the 'Centre'. ... Without this it is impossible to pursue a consistent Communist policy.

The Communist International imperatively, and as an ultimatum, demands that this rupture be brought about at the earliest date. ...

The parties which still adhere to the old Social-Democratic programmes must revise these programmes as speedily as possible and draw up a new Communist programme applicable to the special conditions prevailing in their respective countries in the spirit of the decisions of the Communist International. ...

All parties which desire to affiliate to the Communist International must change their name. Every party desiring to affiliate to the Communist International must bear the name: Communist Party of such and such a country. ... The question of name is not merely a formal question, but one of great political importance. The Communist International has declared resolute war against the whole bourgeois world, and against all yellow, Social-Democratic parties. The difference between the Communist Parties and the old, official 'Social-Democratic' or 'Socialist' parties, which have betrayed the banner of the working class, must be made absolutely clear to every rank-and-file toiler".

(V.I. Lenin: "The Conditions of Affiliation to the Communist International", in: "Selected Works", Volume 10; London; 1946; p. 201-2, 203, 205-6).

In his speech to the First Congress of Collective Farm Shock Brigaders in February 1933, Stalin's inescapable implication is that the Hungarian "socialist revolution" of March 1919 and the Hungarian "Soviet Republic" of March-August 1919 were not genuine:

"Only the October Revolution set itself the aim of abolishing all exploitation and of eliminating all exploiters and oppressors.

You have ... the Workers' and Peasants' Soviet Government. ... There is not, nor has there ever been, another country like this in the world".

(J.V. Stalin: Speech at 1st. Congress of Collective Farm Shock Brigaders, in: "Works", Volume 13; Moscow; 1955; p. 245, 251).

THE HUNGARIAN SOVIET REPUBLIC

OF 1919

PART ONE : THE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND

The Hungarian National-Democratic Revolution of 1848-9

In the 1840s Hungary was a semi-colonial province of the Austrian Empire, three times the size of the present-day state. Its population included not only Magyars (ethnic Hungarians), but also national minorities of Czechs, Germans, Italians, Poles, Romanians, Serbs, Slovaks, Slovenes and Ukrainians.

The social system of Hungary was predominantly feudal and agricultural, with land ownership dominated by a handful of aristocratic Magyar families who were content with their status of junior partners to their Austrian counterparts.

As a capitalist economic system developed, slowly and with difficulty, within Austrian feudalism, the rising bourgeoisies of the nations and part-nations imprisoned within the Empire became the leading force in the democratic revolutionary movement directed against the ruling autocracy centred in Vienna.

On March 13th., 1848 a revolutionary uprising in the imperial capital led to the resignation and flight of the Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Klemens von Metternich, to the acceptance by Emperor Ferdinand I of a Constitution on April 25th., 1848, and to the abdication of the Emperor on December 2nd., 1848 in favour of his nephew, who became Franz Josef I.

In Hungary at the same time, a national-democratic revolution led to the Declaration of Independence of April 14th., 1849, which proclaimed Hungary to be an independent republic with Lajos Kossuth as Governor-President.

Following the "restoration of order" in Vienna by imperial forces commanded by Prince Alfred zu Windisch-Graetz, the independent regime in Hungary was crushed by the combination of an Austrian imperial army under the command of General Baron Julius von Haynau and Russian forces under the command of Field-Marshal Ivan Paskevich. Its overthrow was followed by a bloody reign of terror under Haynau which lasted for nearly a year.

The Compromise of 1867

The one permanent achievement of the revolution of 1848-9 was the law of September 8th., 1848 abolishing serfdom, which was not repealed after the successful counter-revolution. This helped forward the development of the capitalist economic system within Hungary.

In 1859 the Austrian imperial armed forces were defeated by the armies of Italy and France, resulting in the cession to Italy of Lombardy. And in 1866 a further defeat at the hands of Prussia resulted in the cession to Italy of Venetia and the payment to Prussia of a large sum in reparations.

These internal and external developments so weakened the Austrian autocracy that in 1867 it was forced to strengthen its position by raising the status of the Hungarian aristocracy to that of nominally equal partners. The Act of Compromise of May 29th., 1867 transformed the Austrian Empire formally into the Dual Monarchy of Austro-Hungary. By this, Hungary became a Kingdom in "indissoluble unity" with Austria, with the Austrian Emperor as King, with autonomy in internal affairs but accepting the "joint character" of foreign affairs, finance, defence and diplomatic representation.

On June 8th., 1867 the Emperor Franz Josef was crowned King of Hungary.

The Development of Capitalism

Although the development of the capitalist economic system in Hungary continued to be held back by the dominant landed aristocracy, the Compromise of 1867 permitted this development to a limited extent - as the following table shows:

	<u>1867</u>	<u>1913</u>
Coal production (million quintals):	7	102
Iron ore production (million quintals):	3	21
Length of railway lines (kilometres):	2,200	22,000
Number of factories:	24	5,000
Power used in factories (thousand horse-power):	9 (1863)	886
Number of industrial companies:	170 (1873)	1,000
Capital of industrial companies (million crowns):	200 (1873)	1,512 (1910)
Capital of banks (million crowns):	729	13,197
Number of industrial workers (thousands):	110 (1880)	620
% of national income from industry and mining:	16% (1870)	26%

Industrial capital in Hungary was relatively concentrated: by 1900 0.5% of all industrial companies produced 66% of output and employed 44% of the workers. This concentration was particularly strong in metallurgy - 3 iron-producing firms controlled the majority of output.

With the development of industry, the share in it of the Hungarian national capitalist class (which was predominantly Jewish) rose - from one-third of the industrial plants in 1880 to two-thirds in 1913.

Class Composition

In 1913 the class composition of the population (including dependents) was roughly as follows:

	<u>Millions</u>
Landlord class:	0.1
Comprador capitalist class:	0.2
National capitalist class:	0.2
Rich peasantry:	0.3
Urban petty bourgeoisie:	1.9
Middle peasantry:	6.0
Poor peasantry:	8.2
Urban working class:	3.9
Total:	<u>20.8</u>

The Development of the Working Class Movement

The first political organisation claiming to represent the interests of the working class was the General Workers' Association, formed on February 23rd., 1868 on the initiative of János Hrabje, a member of the General Council of the First International. Its programme, strongly influenced by the teachings of Ferdinand Lassalle, included demands for the extension of the franchise, for working class education, and for the establishment of workers' productive associations "to overcome capitalism".

In the spring of 1871 the GWA organised a series of strikes in support of improved working conditions, and a number of demonstrations in support of the Paris Commune. After the suppression of the Commune, the government banned the GWA, arresting its leaders and, in April/May 1872, trying them for treason. Although they were acquitted, the persecution brought about the disbanding of the organisation, although its Sickness and Disablement Fund (established in 1870 on the initiative of Károly Farkas) survived.

In 1876 Leó Frankel, who had been Commissioner of Labour in the Paris Commune and a member of the General Council of the First International, returned home to Hungary, and on his initiative a conference held on April 21st.-22nd., 1878 re-established a political organisation claiming to represent the interests of the working class - the Non-Voters' Party (the only name which the authorities would permit).

At a conference on May 16-17th., 1880 the General Workers' Sickness and Disablement Fund merged with the Non-Voters' Party to form the General Workers' Party of Hungary. Although this party did not break completely with the influence of Lassalle, its programme was couched in the language of Marxism and aimed at public ownership of the means of production.

In 1881 Frankel was arrested on charges of "criminal libel" in the party's press and sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment. On his release he left the country, and the leadership of the General Workers' Party shifted into the hands of the more openly right-wing officials of the sick fund.

In 1889 the General Workers' Party of Hungary took part in the foundation congress of the Second International.

A conference of the GWP in the autumn of 1889 elected Pal Engelmann to the leadership, and on his initiative the party began to lay greater stress on socialist agitation. In 1890, for the first time in Hungary, 60,000 workers celebrated May Day.

At a congress on December 7th., 1890 the General Workers' Party of Hungary was renamed the Social Democratic Party of Hungary, and the congress became the First Congress of the SDP. The congress adopted a "Declaration of Principle" designating as the ultimate aim of the party the public ownership of the means of production, but without specifying how this was to be brought about, and as more immediate aims universal suffrage and "parliamentary democracy". It made, however, no mention of land reform.

In the summer of 1891 violent clashes took place in the rural south-east of Hungary (the "Stormy Corner") between the gendarmerie and agricultural workers demonstrating for higher wages and better working conditions. Following this, at the Second Congress of the SDP at the end of 1892, the right-wing officials of the sick fund, who repudiated class struggle, succeeded in expelling the "left-wing", headed by Engelmann, from the party.

At the Third (Unification) Congress of the SDP on May 13th., 1894, the "left-wing" was readmitted to the party, and one of its representatives, Ignác Silberberg, became party leader. This congress adopted, for the first time, an agrarian programme; this, however, declared that the working class had no interest in "preserving the peasantry" and put forward a policy of nationalisation of the large estates without redistribution.

This policy towards the peasantry was continued into the 20th. century. An article on "Peasant Politics" published in "Nepszava" (The People's Voice) in July 1907 declared:

"The peasantry is reactionary in the true sense of the word. ...

This ... makes it impossible to enter into even temporary alliances with the peasantry".

("Peasant Politics", in: "Népszava" (The People's Voice), July 26th., 1907, in: R.L. Tóké: "Bela Kun and the Hungarian Soviet Republic"; New York; 1967; p. 6).

On April 22nd., 1894, following the arrest of János Szanto Kovács, who had been organising agricultural workers at Hódmezővásárhely in the Great Plain, the local population stormed the town hall and engaged police and the army in heavy fighting. The government declared a state of emergency and banned all "socialist" meetings, while Szanto Kovács and the Hódmezővásárhely "rebels" were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.

At the end of 1895, however, the right-wing faction had been successful in removing the "left-wing" faction, headed by Silberberg, from the leadership.

In the summer of 1897 large-scale harvest strikes broke out amongst agricultural labourers in 14 counties. The movement found enthusiastic support within the leadership of the SDP in the person of István Várkonyi, who had himself been an agricultural labourer and who had commenced publication in the summer of 1896, mainly from his own resources, of the newspaper "Földművelő" (The Agricultural Labourer). The leadership of the SDP repudiated class struggle in the countryside, as in the towns, and officially dissociated the party from Várkonyi and his paper. As a result, on the initiative of Várkonyi, a congress was held at Cegléd on September 8th., 1897 which formed a new party, the Independent Socialist Party which adopted a correct agrarian policy of demanding, not only better conditions for agricultural workers, but the nationalisation of church lands and of all estates over 60 hectares - these to be redistributed in plots of 3 hectares at a low rent. The influence of the ISP spread rapidly in the rural areas of Hungary, and in 1898 the government arrested Várkonyi, banned "Földművelő" and savagely repressed the movement for the land reform. At the same time the government declared trade unions under militant leadership (about one-third of the total) illegal, and even banned the congress of the SDP from being held. In 1898 also the government adopted the so-called "Slave Act", which compelled every farm worker to enter into a written contract with his employer, the breaking of which constituted a criminal offence, and which prescribed severe penalties for organising agricultural workers or engaging in strikes.

Until 1899 trade unions were local organisations only, but in this year the first Trade Union Congress was held - following which the first country-wide trade unions were organised. By 1904 the number of trade unionists had risen to more than 50,000, five times the number in 1899. Almost all the trade unions were closely associated with the Social Democratic Party.

On March 25th., 1906 the Independent Socialist Peasant Party was formed under the leadership of András Achim. It published "Paraszt Újság" (The Peasant Journal) and called for land reform, universal suffrage, progressive taxation and measures to protect small farmers and agricultural workers. Although Achim endeavoured to build an alliance between the poor and middle peasantry on the one hand and the industrial workers on the other, this was fiercely resisted by the leadership of the SDP. In May 1911 Achim was shot down by the sons of a landowner, and his party fell to pieces.

Meanwhile in 1909 the landlord class made a rival attempt to win the middle peasantry to its side by the formation of the National Independence and 148 Farmers' Party (known as the "Smallholders' Party"), led by István Nagyatádi Szabó, but this did not become a serious political force until after the destruction of the "Soviet" Republic in August 1918.

Also in 1909 the Hungarian national capitalist class launched, at the University of Budapest, the Galileo Circle as a centre for progressive young

intellectuals from the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie.

On May 23rd., 1912 the SDP launched a general strike and demonstration in Budapest in protest at the appointment of the arch-reactionary Count István Tisza as Speaker of the House (an appointment made to try to force through the Army Bill against parliamentary opposition). The demonstration was attacked by mounted police and units of the army, and pitched battles were fought for most of the day, which became known as "Bloody Thursday".

On July 28th., 1914 Austro-Hungary declared war on Serbia, and within the next few days the war developed into the First World War, with Austro-Hungary and Germany at war with Britain, France and Russia.

The Social-Democratic Party gave full support to the war "against tsarist barbarism", and in February 1918 Jakab Weltner, the editor of the party's newspaper "Népszava" (The People's Voice) was able to boast that it was one of the few parties of the Second International in which no left-wing group of opposition to the war broke away:

"Jakab Weltner, editor of the party paper 'Népszava', could boast in February 1918 that the Hungarian party was among the few which did not split during the war".

(P. Kenez: "Coalition Politics in the Hungarian Soviet Republic", in: A.C. Janos and W.B. Slottman (Eds.): "Revolution in Perspective"; Berkeley; 1971; p. 65).

On November 21st., 1916 the Emperor Franz Josef died, and was succeeded by his nephew as Karl I (Karl IV of Hungary).

On November 25th., 1917 several hundred thousand people attended a mass meeting in the Hall of Industry in Budapest called to express support for the socialist revolution in Russia. The meeting adopted a resolution calling for a general strike against the war and for the formation of Workers' Councils along the lines of the Soviets formed in Russia.

The first such Workers' Council was set up on December 26th., 1917.

Until 1919, the franchise was limited by property and sex qualifications to 6% of the adult male population, so that the Hungarian National Assembly was dominated by political representatives of the landlord, comprador capitalist and national capitalist classes:

"In 1918 ... the National Assembly had 413 members. ... 267 of these 413 members were big landowners. The workers in industry and agriculture and the smallholders did not have a single representative".

(M. Rákosi: Statement at Trial, 1935, in: "The Imprisonment and Defence of Mátyás Rákosi"; London; 1954; p. 116).

The Hungarian National capitalist class was represented in the National Assembly by deputies from the Independence and '48 Party, formed in July 1916 under the leadership of Count Mihály Károlyi, and from the National Bourgeois Radical Party, formed in June 1914 under the leadership of Oszkár Jászi. The other party representing the interests of the national capitalist class, the Social Democratic Party, did not have a single member in the National Assembly, or in any local council.

PART TWO : THE EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE NATIONAL-DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

(January - October 1918)

The January General Strike

On January 18th., 1918 a large-scale political strike broke out in Vienna in protest at the harsh demands being made by the Central Powers against Soviet Russia in the peace talks at Brest-Litovak. Budapest workers joined the strike, which for three days spread through most of the industrial centres in Hungary, involving more than half a million workers.

The government reacted to the strike by placing returned prisoners-of-war from Russia in quarantine for screening, by banning the Galileo Circle, by arresting labour leaders who had expressed sympathy with Soviet Russia, and by creating a special security headquarters to combat "subversion".

The Development of the National Movements

By the spring of 1918 the national movements of the oppressed part-nations within Hungary were demanding a radical redrawing of the frontiers of South-Eastern Europe along ethnic lines. The Allied Powers gave support to many of these national movements with the aim of further weakening the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The Social Democratic Parties in both Austria and Hungary denounced the demands of the national movements in the name of preserving the territorial integrity of the Empire.

The June General Strike

From the middle of 1918 Hungary became increasingly short of food, fuel and raw materials. The real wages of the workers had sunk to 53% of the pre-war level, that of day labourers to 46%, that of office workers to 33%.

On June 20th. the Military Commandant in Budapest ordered workers demonstrating at the MÁVAG works in support of demands for the resignation of the government to be fired upon. Within a few hours all factories in the capital had stopped work in protest, and the workers of the provincial towns followed suit the next day. The general strike lasted nine days and involved half a million workers, who demonstrated, despite martial law, for an end to the war and the resignation of the government.

The Disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Army

By 1918 the Austro-Hungarian Army was gradually disintegrating. In February a mutiny broke out in the Cattaro fleet. By the summer the number of deserters exceeded a hundred thousand. On May 20th. mutinous soldiers at Pécs occupied the barracks and railway station, and were disarmed only after a long and bitter battle.

On September 30th., 1918 Bulgaria surrendered to the Allied Powers, and the enfeebled Austro-Hungarian army was compelled to try to fill the gaping hole in the southern front.

The Extraordinary Congress of the SDP

In mid-October 1918 an Extraordinary Congress of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary adopted a resolution calling for the formation of a "People's Government" in Hungary.

The Proclamation of Federal Union

In an effort to save the Empire from dissolution, on October 16th., 1918 Emperor Karl proclaimed its transformation into a Federal Union of four states - German, Czech, South Slav and Ukrainian. "The lands of the Hungarian Crown" were, however, to be outside this federal arrangement and to be governed as at present. The Polish inhabitants of the Empire would be permitted to join the new state of Poland, whose independence had been proclaimed on October 7th.

Within the next two weeks National Councils were formed by the peoples of most of the oppressed nations and part-nations within the Empire.

The Resignation of the Wekerle Government

As it became clear that the military position of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was hopeless, on October 23rd., 1918 the Hungarian government, headed by Sándor Wekerle, resigned.

The Formation of the Hungarian National Council

On October 25th., 1918, on the initiative of Count Mihály Károlyi, the leader of the Independence and '48 Party, a Hungarian National Council was formed in Budapest, composed of representatives of his own party, the National Bourgeois Radical Party, and the Social Democratic Party.

The Battle of the Chain Bridge

On October 28th., 1918 a large crowd marched to Castle Hill in Buda in a demonstration calling for the appointment of a government headed by Count Mihály Károlyi. At the Chain Bridge police fired on the demonstration, killing 3 people and wounding 55.

The Formation of the Hadik Government.

On October 29th., 1918, in defiance of popular demands, the Emperor appointed a political representative of the landlords, Count János Hadik, as Prime Minister of Hungary. His government lasted barely two days.

The Request for an Armistice.

On October 29th., 1918 the Austro-Hungarian government requested the Allied Powers for an armistice (which was signed in Padua on November 3rd.).

During the war Hungary had mobilised 3.6 million men (17% of the population), and had lost 0.7 million killed, with 0.7 million wounded and 0.7 million taken prisoner.

The Dissolution of the Empire

By this time the Austro-Hungarian Empire had no real existence.

On October 21st., 1918 the 210 German members of the Imperial Parliament had formed themselves into a National Assembly of German Austria, and proclaimed this an independent state on October 30th.

On October 27th. the Romanian National Council in Bukovina announced its secession from Austro-Hungary in order to join Romania.

On October 28th. the Czech National Council, and on October 30th. the Slovak National Council proclaimed the establishment of an independent state of Czechoslovakia.

On October 29th., 1918 the parliament of Croatia voted to secede from Austro-Hungary in order to join the new state of Yugoslavia, which was proclaimed on the same day.

On October 31st., 1918 the Ukrainian National Council in Galicia announced its secession from Austro-Hungary in order to join the Ukraine - then under the Skoropadsky regime.

The National-Democratic Revolution in Hungary

On October 30th., 1918 crowds of soldiers and workers demonstrated in front of the headquarters in Budapest of the Hungarian National Council. By this time the Austro-Hungarian state authority had virtually collapsed, and at dawn on October 31st. they occupied, without resistance, the headquarters of the Military Commandant of Budapest and the principal public buildings throughout the capital.

The Hungarian national-democratic revolution had been accomplished.

PART THREE : THE KÁROLYI REGIME

(October 1918 - March 1919)

The Formation of the Károlyi Government

On October 31st., 1919 the victory of the national-democratic revolution was celebrated in Budapest with the wearing of michaelmas daisies. The government headed by Count János Hadik resigned, the revolutionary soldiers arrested the military commandant of Budapest and the king called on Count Mihály Károlyi (leader of the Independence and '48 Party) to form a government.

Károlyi formed his government later the same day, with Ministers drawn from his own party, the National Bourgeois Radical Party and the Social Democratic Party. In its programme, the government promised to enact legislation formalising independence, introducing universal suffrage and the secret ballot, civil rights, social reforms and land reform.

The Formation of the Budapest Central Workers' Council

On November 1st. the peasants began to drive out the local government officials and to disarm the gendarmerie. In the towns the workers had already begun to form Councils modelled on the Soviets set-up in Russia, and the soldiers in the army quickly followed suit. From meetings and demonstrations all over the country, demands for the immediate proclamation of a republic began to flow in to the government.

On November 2nd., in an effort to canalise this spontaneous movement into legal channels, the leaders of the Social Democratic Party formed the Budapest Central Workers' Council, under the control of right-wing social-democrats. This body, jointly with the government, immediately called upon the population to observe "law and order", to wait for the government's decrees, and to surrender all arms; it began to organise a National Guard for the preservation of "order".

The Armistice

On November 3rd. representatives of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy signed an armistice with representatives of the Allied Powers in Padua. This contained no provisions as to the frontiers of Hungary, and the Allied army in the Balkans continued to advance. A government delegation led by Károlyi therefore began negotiations in Belgrade with General Franchet d'Esperey, the Allied Commander-in-Chief in the Balkans, and a separate armistice was signed here on November 13th. The demarcation line laid down in this armistice agreement ran deep into the former territory of Hungary in the south and east, but did not affect Slovakia in the north.

National Policy

The Károlyi government officially condemned the repressive policy adopted by the Dual Monarchy to the national minorities on the territory of Hungary. At the same time, in the interests of the capitalist class which it represented, it was keenly anxious to maintain the territorial integrity of the old Hungary, and for this reason rejected the granting of the right of secession to the national minorities.

On November 13th., 1918 the Minister for Nationalities, Oszkár Jászi, began negotiations with the various National Councils within Hungary in an effort to persuade them to accept measures of limited political and cultural autonomy within the Hungarian state. This programme was, however, unacceptable to the National Councils.

The Proclamation of the People's Republic

On November 16th., 1918 the National Council passed a "People's Decree", which was ratified by a mass meeting of 300,000 people in front of Parliament. It declared that:

"Hungary is a People's Republic, sovereign and independent from any other country".

(National Council: People's Decree, Nov. 16th., 1918, in: J. Kende, L. Gecsényi and A. Steinbach: "Revolution in Hungary: 1918 and 1919"; London; 1968; p. 12).

The decree went on to bind the government to enact laws on the following questions:

- "(a) the universal, secret, equal and direct right of all, including women, to vote in the election of Parliament, municipal and rural district councils;
 - (b) freedom of the press;
 - (c) people's jurors;
 - (d) the right of assembly and to hold meetings;
 - (e) the allocation of land to those who tilled it;
- and procedure for the immediate implementation of these laws".
(Ibid.; p. 12).

The Foundation of the Communist Party

On March 24th., 1918 a group of released Hungarian prisoners-of-war in Russia, headed by Béla Kun, had formed the Hungarian Federation of the Russian Communist Party, which proceeded to carry on propaganda work among Hungarian prisoners-of-war still interned in the Soviet Republic. It also ran two schools - in Moscow and Omsk - in which, by November 1918, some 500 cadres had been trained as cadres for the future Communist Party of Hungary.

Béla Kun was born on February 20th., 1886 in the village of Lele, in Szilágy county in Transylvania. He joined the Social Democratic Party in 1902 at the age of 16.

In the autumn of 1904 he enrolled in the Kolozsvár Law Academy, at the same time taking a part-time post with the local Workers' Insurance Fund and writing articles for the radical newspaper "Or" (Guardian).

In 1905 he moved to Nagyvárad to join the staff of another radical newspaper "Szabadság" (Liberty), and in February 1907 moved once more, this time to the capital to become a staff member of the influential "Budapesti Napló" (Budapest Post).

In 1913 he married Irén Gal.

On the outbreak of war in 1914, he was conscripted into the army, and in January 1915 sent to the Russian front. In early 1916 he was taken prisoner, and interned near Tomsk in Siberia.

In the spring of 1917 Kun wrote to the Tomsk City Council, which was controlled by the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, and persuaded it to allow himself and a number of other prisoners who were members of the SDP to live outside the prison camp.

On April 23rd., 1917 he wrote to the Tomsk branch of the RSDLP offering his services to "the socialist cause". At the end of the month he was admitted to the branch, becoming a member of its Executive Committee.

In early December 1917, following the socialist revolution in Russia, he went to Petrograd at the invitation of the Central Committee of the RCP. Here he met Lenin and joined the staff of the Propaganda Department of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs - becoming editor of its Hungarian-language newspaper "Nemzetközi Szocialista" (International Socialist) and later editor of its German-language newspaper "Fackel" (The Torch).

He attached himself to the "Left Communist" faction within the party, headed by Nikolai Bukharin.

On February 23rd., 1918 the Propaganda Department of the PC of Foreign Affairs was wound up in accordance with the terms of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.

On March 24th., 1918 he became Chairman of the Hungarian Federation of the RCP, and in April also Chairman of the Confederation of Foreign Communist Groups of the RCP.

On November 4th., 1918, when the news of the national-democratic revolution in Hungary had reached the Soviet Republic, the Hungarian Federation of the RCP convened a conference in Moscow, which resolved that members should return home forthwith and proceed there as soon as possible to found a Communist Party.

Béla Kun and other leading members of the Federation arrived in Budapest on November 17th. - Mátyás Rákosi had already returned in May - and others followed during the next few days.

On November 24th., 1918 the returned members of the Hungarian Federation of the RCP, together with some left-wing elements who had now broken away from the SDP and the anarcho-syndicalist Revolutionary Socialists (established in the autumn of 1917), held the Foundation Congress of the Communist Party of Hungary, under the chairmanship of Károlyi Vantus.

The Temporary Constitution of the party, adopted by the congress, contained the "leftist" provision that

"... only manual labourers and landless peasants are eligible for party membership".

(Temporary Constitution, CPH, in: R.L. Tökés: "Béla Kun and the Hungarian Soviet Republic"; New York; 1967; p. 102).

The congress elected a Central Committee of 18 members, headed by Béla Kun as Chairman, and an Alternate Central Committee, headed by Tibor Szamuely as Chairman, to function in case the open CC was unable to function. The latter, in fact, took over the leadership of the party during the imprisonment of members of the open CC, from February 21st. to March 21st., 1919.

The principal points of the party's programme, adopted at its Foundation Congress, were:

- (1) an end to class collaboration with the capitalist class;
- (2) exposure of the right-wing leadership of the Social Democratic Party;
- (3) effective means to combat unemployment;
- (4) assistance for demobilised soldiers and the disabled, to be paid out of war profits;

- (5) the immediate introduction of "workers' control" in the factories;
 - (6) nationalisation of the large estates and their conversion into large-scale state or cooperative farms;
 - (7) the replacement of the foreign policy based on seeking the favour of the Allied Powers by one based on alliance with Soviet Russia;
 - (8) extension of the role of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Councils;
- and (9) ultimately, the seizure of political power by these Councils and the construction of socialism.

On December 7th., 1919 the party began publication of the newspaper "Vörös Újság" (Red Journal), and in January, 1919 of a monthly theoretical journal "Internationale" (International).

Although the party conducted agitation in the factories, in the first months of its existence it had little success in winning the support of the organised workers who, by and large, remained loyal to the Social Democratic Party. It did, however, win wide support among the unemployed, who were neglected by the SPD.

Nevertheless, a mass meeting organised by the party in Budapest in the second half of December 1918 endorsed the slogan "All Power to the Workers' Councils!", and this slogan was adopted in the next few weeks by a number of such councils.

The Formation of the Hungarian National Defence Force Association

On November 30th., 1918 a fascist-type counter-revolutionary organisation representing the interests of the landlord class was formed - the Hungarian National Defence Force Association (Magyar Országos Véderő Egyesület) (MOVE), under the leadership of Gyula Gömbös.

The Revision of the Armistice Agreement

In December 1918 the Allied Powers unilaterally amended the armistice agreement signed with the Hungarian government in Belgrade on November 13th. This amendment permitted the Czechoslovak and Romanian armed forces to cross the demarcation line laid down in the armistice agreement into Slovakia and Transylvania respectively.

Government Legislation

In December 1918 and January 1919 the Károlyi government adopted:

- (1) an Electoral Law granting the vote to all men over the age of 21 with 6 years' Hungarian citizenship, and to women on a more restricted franchise, and providing for elections to be held by secret ballot;
 - (2) a law providing for "freedom of speech, of the press and of assembly";
 - (3) a law dismissing the Lords Lieutenant of the old regime, and replacing them with government-appointed Commissioners;
 - (4) a law establishing an 8-hour working day;
 - (5) a law establishing an "autonomous region" for the Ruthenian people living in Hungary;
- and (6) a "Law for the Defence of the Republic", giving the government power to intern persons "in the interests of the security of the state".

The January Strike and Occupation

On January 2nd., 1919 a strike broke out at one of the largest coal mines in the country, at Salgotarján, and the miners proceeded to occupy the pits, the local administration buildings and the railway station. The government crushed the action by armed force, and executed 10 strike leaders on January 10th.

Over the next few days, however, a number of factories in the capital and in provincial towns were taken over by Workers' Councils, who evicted the managers and proceeded to run the enterprises themselves.

The Election of the President

On January 11th., 1919 the National Council elected Mihály Károlyi President of the Republic.

The Coolidge Mission

On January 15th., 1919 a mission from the Allied Powers, led by US historian Archibald Coolidge, arrived in Budapest. The government sought to convince the mission of the importance of granting economic "aid" to Hungary - through the American Relief Administration directed by Herbert Hoover - in order to strengthen the position of the bourgeois democratic regime and avert the "threat" of the "spread of Bolshevism".

The mission did, in fact, make such recommendations, but they were not acted upon.

The Formation of the Berinkey Government.

On January 18th., 1919 President Károlyi appointed Dénes Berinkey, a lawyer who had been Minister of Justice in the Károlyi government, Prime Minister. He formed a new coalition government, with four Ministers (of Education, Public Welfare, Trade, and Defence) drawn from the Social Democratic Party.

The Offensive against the Communist Party

A few days after the Coolidge mission had left Hungary - leaving behind one of its members, Philip Brown, in Budapest - the head of the British Military Mission in Vienna, Colonel Sir Thomas Cunninghame, had talks with the Hungarian government, informing it that Allied economic "aid" would be dependent upon "a reduction of Communist influence" in Hungary.

Accordingly, on January 28th., 1919, the Budapest Central Workers' Council, under the leadership of right-wing members of the Social Democratic Party, expelled members of the Communist Party from its membership and from that of the trade unions, in the interests of "safeguarding democracy".

A few days later, on the orders of the Minister of the Interior, police raided the premises of the Communist Party and of its newspaper "Vörös Újság" (Red Journal), destroying the latter's printing press.

The Land Reform Law

On February 16th., 1919 the government enacted its Land Reform Law. It provided that all estate land in excess of 700 acres (in certain instances, over 300 acres) was to be acquired by the state, with compensation payable to the landholders concerned. This nationalised land was then to be leased or sold to peasants, either individually or cooperatively.

On March 23rd., 1919 President Mihály Károlyi distributed surplus land from his own vast estates at Kákkápolna in accordance with the provisions of the law.

The law failed to satisfy the expectation of the land-hungry poor peasantry. Not only did they consider the limits set on the size of estates to be unreasonably high, but they found that the process of distribution was surrounded with so much bureaucratic red tape - of which the civil servants, who were mostly unsympathetic to the land reform, took full advantage - that very little land was distributed during the lifetime of the Károlyi regime.

The impatient peasants at first deluged the government with demands that the land reform should be speeded up, but soon they began arbitrarily to occupy the large estates, redistributing the occupied land either among individual peasant families or - in so far as they were under the influence of the SDP (which opposed individual redistribution) - to peasant cooperatives.

The Unemployed Demonstration

The dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire had a serious effect on the economy of Hungary, already disastrously weakened by four years of war. This, together with the occupation of the southern, south-eastern and northern areas of Hungary's former territory, further fragmented the economic unit which had until then functioned as an economic whole. Serious shortage of fuel and raw materials brought the majority of the factories to a standstill.

As a result of this economic situation, by the beginning of 1919 unemployment in the towns had assumed massive proportions, the ranks of the unemployed being swelled by over a million demobilised soldiers and refugees from the occupied areas.

On February 20th., 1919 a mass demonstration of unemployed took place outside the offices of the Social Democratic Party's daily newspaper "Népszava" (The People's Voice) in Budapest. The demonstrators clashed with police, a number of them being injured and several policemen fatally injured.

The Arrest of the Communist Party Leaders

For some weeks the Social Democratic Party Ministers in the government had been resisting recommendations from the Minister of the Interior and the Commissioner of Police that the leaders of the Communist Party should be arrested. The violence of February 20th. gave them the pretext to change their position, and on February 21st. 68 leading members of the Communist Party were arrested. They were, however, treated as political prisoners, enabling them to receive visitors and to continue a degree of leadership of the party from prison.

The Formation of the Directories

In March 1919 the arbitrary occupation of the large estates took on country-wide dimensions.

In numerous places, both in the towns and in the countryside, the Workers' and Peasants' Councils refused to allow the government-appointed Commissioners to take up their posts, and seated their own local administrations - called Directories.

The Allied Ultimatum

On February 26th., 1919 the Peace Conference in Versailles decided to set up a "neutral zone" in Hungary, outside the jurisdiction of the Hungarian government and to be occupied by Allied forces, in the south-eastern part of

the country. The purpose of this move was to establish a secure buffer zone between Romanian and Hungarian armed forces, in order that the former could be used in the war of intervention against the Soviet Republic without any danger of their being attacked by the latter.

The Allied demand was handed to President Karolyi on March 20th., 1919 by the representative of the Allied Powers in Budapest, the French Lieutenant-Colonel Vix, in the form of a Note.

Vix made it clear to the Hungarian government that the demarcation line of the "neutral zone" would be the new frontier of Hungary:

"Vix added the verbal comment that the new line was not to be regarded as merely an armistice line, but as a definite political frontier".
(O. Jászi: "Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Hungary"; New York; 1969; p. 92).

and that if the government did not accept the ultimatum by 6 p.m. the following day (March 21st.), the Allied Powers would reopen hostilities against Hungary:

"If by six o'clock on the evening of the next day (March 21st.) an unconditional affirmative reply had not been received ... the Entente threatened us with the renewal of a state of war".
(M. Karolyi: Statement to Cabinet, March 20th., 1919, in: O. Jászi: *ibid.*; p. 94).

The Resignation of the Berinkey Government

Since the "neutral zone" included areas inhabited entirely by Magyars, the government considered it impossible to accept the ultimatum. On the other hand, it considered that the armed forces at its disposal were totally insufficient to enable it to reject the ultimatum. It therefore resigned on the day the ultimatum was received, March 20th., 1919.

The Merger of the CP and the SDP

On the afternoon of March 21st., 1919, a delegation of leaders of the Social Democratic Party, headed by Jakab Weltner, visited the leaders of the Communist Party in prison and informed them that they would be released forthwith from prison if they agreed:

firstly, that the CP should immediately "merge" with the SDP into a single party; and

secondly, that the new party should immediately proclaim a "Soviet Republic" and take over governmental power.

The imprisoned Communist Party leaders agreed to these proposals, and were immediately released from prison.

On the following day, March 21st., 1919, the leaderships of the two parties met and formally agreed - without either party attempting to hold a congress which would normally decide such an issue of principle - to "merge" the two parties into the Socialist Party of Hungary:

"The Hungarian Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party of Hungary held a joint meeting of the Executive Committees and resolved the complete merger of the two parties.

The united party's name, pending the revolutionary International's decision on the party's final name, shall be the 'Hungarian Socialist Party'.

... The two parties will jointly participate in the leadership of the new party".

(Executive Committees, HSDP and CPH: Joint Statement, March 21st., 1919, in: J. Weltner (Ed.): "Az Egység Okmányai" (The Documents of Unity); Budapest; 1919; p. 5-6).

A few members of the right-wing of the SDP refused to participate in the "merger":

"A part of the right leadership (of the SDP - Ed.) resigned".
(K. Radek: "The Lessons of the Hungarian Revolution", in: "Die Internationale" (The International), Volume 2, No. 21; February 25th., 1920; in: H. Gruber (Ed.): "International Communism in the Era of Lenin"; New York; 1972; p. 141).

but this did not change the fundamental position:

The "merger" was not brought about, of course, because the leaders of the Social Democratic Party had been miraculously converted overnight to the principles of Marxism-Leninism:

"Hungarian social democracy, belonging to the most politically corrupt creatures of the Second International, was bankrupt. ...

Reality was the fact of the bankruptcy of social democracy, not its conversion to communism".
(K. Radek: *ibid.*; p. 141, 142).

"The Hungarian Social Democratic Party is the most spineless of the parties belonging to the Second International".
(M. Rákosi: Statement at Trial, July 1926, in: "The Imprisonment and Defence of Mátyás Rákosi"; London; 1954; p. 39).

"Up to the last moment, the Károlyi Government, and with it the Social Democrats, were hostile to us".
(M. Rákosi: Statement at Trial, 1935, in: *ibid.*; p. 177).

The real character of the "merger" is evidenced by the relative sizes of the two parties participating in it.

Because of the peculiar method of organisation of the Social Democratic Party, by which every member of a trade union automatically became a member of the party, its total membership in the spring of 1919 was approximately 700,000, organised in thousands of branches:

"The members of the trade unions were at the same time members of the Social Democratic Party, and the number of organised workers in Hungary reached 700,000 by the end of 1918".

(Z. Nagy: "The 1918 October Revolution: 50 Years After", in: "The New Hungarian Quarterly", Volume 9, No. 31; Autumn 1968; p. 7).

"The Social Democratic party had been an organisation of trade unions where membership in a union automatically meant membership in the party".
(P. Kenez: "Coalition Politics in the Hungarian Soviet Republic", in: A.C. Janos and W.B. Slottman (Ed.): "Revolution in Perspective"; Berkeley; 1971; p. 64-5).

"The Social Democratic Party already counted 700,000 members. ... The Social Democrats formed an intact party, possessing thousands of branches".
(M. Rákosi: Statement at Trial, 1935, in: "The Imprisonment and Defence of Mátyás Rákosi"; London; 1954; p. 143).

The total membership of the Communist Party, formed less than four months earlier, was, of course, only a small fraction of this. Jenő Varga speaks of the party in the spring of 1919 as having

"... very few members".

(J. Varga: "Vengriya" (Hungary), in: "Bolshaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya" (Great Soviet Encyclopaedia), Volume 10; Moscow; 1928; p. 85).

Vilmos Böhm estimates the membership of the Communist Party at this time as

"... about 1,000"

(V. Böhm, cited by: M. Károlyi: "Memoirs: Faith without Illusion"; London; 1956; p. 376)

and Oskar Jászi at

"... 5,000"

(O. Jászi: "Revolution and Counter-revolution in Hungary"; New York; 1967; p. 118).

Even on the basis of Jászi's higher estimate, therefore, the total membership of the Communist Party in the spring of 1919 was no more than 0.7% of that of the Social Democratic Party.

The "merger" between the Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party was thus the liquidation of the party of the working class, and the virtual submersion of its members in the Social Democratic Party.

On the side of the Communist Party, the "merger" was accepted by a majority of the leadership who accepted a Luxemburgist underestimation of the role of the party in the socialist revolution:

"The ease with which they (the Communists - Ed.) sacrificed their organisation followed from the Hungarian Communists' concept of the Party, which was more Luxemburgist than Leninist. ... It would be anachronistic to think of the Hungarian Party at that time as a Bolshevist organization. Béla Kun had little understanding of Leninist ideology, and the theoreticians had not yet freed themselves from their Western European ... Socialist background. ..."

György Lukács who ... was considered to be on the right wing of the party, and László Rudas, who was a leader of the left wing, agreed with Luxemburg's ideas of spontaneity. ... Footnoting Luxemburg's 'Mass Strike', he (Rudas - Ed.) wrote that parties played only secondary roles in revolutions".

(P. Kenez: *ibid.*; p. 70-1).

The "merger" was, however, opposed by a number of leading members of the Communist Party, notably by Béla Szanto, Tibor Szamuely, Mátyás Rákosi, Jenő Laszlo and Laszlo Rudas, who were denounced, on account of their opposition, by Béla Kun and those supporting the "merger" as "leftists";

"Quite a few among us could already at that time anticipate the fateful significance of this merger. Most comrades, including Comrade Béla Kun, called us either overly cautious or overly radical. But the course of events revealed inghastly lucidity how right I had been in my objections to this merger".

(B. Szántó: "The Real Reason for the Collapse of the Hungarian Soviet Republic", in: "Die Internationale" (The International), Volume 1, No. 15/16; November 1st., 1919; H. Gruber (Ed.): "International Communism in the Era of Lenin"; New York; 1972; p. 133).

"The greatest error committed by the Hungarian workers' revolution of 1919 ... consisted of allowing the revolutionary party of the Hungarian workers, the Communist Party, to be absorbed into the Social Democratic Party".

(M. Rákosi: Statement at Trial, July 1926, in: "The Imprisonment and Defence of Matyás Rákosi"; London; 1954; p. 42).

The new party carried on the publication of the former SPD newspaper "Népszava" (The People's Voice) as its morning paper, and of the former CP newspaper "Vörös Újság" (Red Journal) as its evening paper.

PART FOUR : THE "SOVIET REPUBLIC"

(March - August 1919)

The Formation of the Revolutionary Governing Council

The "merger" agreement between the Executive Committees of the Social Democratic and Communist Parties provided that the two former parties would "jointly participate" in forming a government:

"The two parties will jointly participate in ... the government".
(ECs, HSDP and CPH: Joint Statement of March 21st., 1919, in:
J. Weltner (Ed.): "Az Egység Okmányai" (The Documents of Unity);
Budapest; 1919; p. 5-6).

and that the new party formed by the "merger" would immediately "assume complete authority":

"The party, in the name of the proletariat, immediately assumes complete authority".
(Ibid.).

On March 21st., 1919, therefore, the leaders of the Hungarian Socialist Party formed a new government, the Revolutionary Governing Council, with Sándor Garbai (a former leader of the SDP) as its President. The members of the government, called People's Commissars, who headed the various departments of state, called People's Commissariats, were, in fact, drawn entirely from the former SDP with one exception: the former leader of the CPH, Béla Kun as - significantly, in view of the real aim behind the formation of the RGC - People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs:

"Béla Kun was the only Communist Commissar out of 12 in the government formed on March 21st., 1919. ...

The new government had an almost exclusively Socialist (i.e. social democratic - Ed.) leadership. With the exception of Béla Kun, all commissars were Socialists.

The only commissariat headed by a Communist was that for foreign affairs".

(P. Kenez: "Coalition Politics in the Hungarian Soviet Republic", in:
A.C. Janos and W.B. Slottman (Eds.): "Revolution in Perspective"; Berkeley;
1971; p. 62, 68, 80).

In order to maintain the appearance of a "socialist revolution", the new government was not formally appointed by President Mihály Károlyi. He simply withdrew from the political scene.

The left-wing of the former Communist Party, led by Tibor Szamuely, who had opposed the dissolution of the party, also opposed the acceptance by the former Communist Party of less than 50% of the posts in the Revolutionary Governing Council:

"The greatest error committed by the Hungarian workers' revolution of 1919 ... consisted of ... the fact that the important posts in the revolutionary regime were occupied by Social Democratic leaders who sabotaged and betrayed our cause".

(M. Rákosi: Statement at Trial, July 1926, in: "The Imprisonment and Defence of Mátyás Rákosi"; London; 1954; p. 42).

Béla Kun, in fact, found himself at one with the former leaders of the SDP in preferring responsible posts to be occupied by members of the former SDP rather than by members of the left-wing of the former CP, and in allotting the latter only minor positions:

"With the cooperation of Landler, Garbai and Böhm, Kun gradually excluded the leftists from sensitive positions in the Revolutionary Governing Council, ... exiling the leftists to the peripheries of power". (H.L. Tőkés: "Béla Kun and the Hungarian Soviet Republic", New York; 1967; p. 155).

The "merger" agreement between the SDP and the CP had declared, rather vaguely, that it would be the aim of the new party

"... to completely disarm the bourgeoisie". (ECs, HSDP and CPH: Joint Statement of March 21st., 1919, in: J. Weltner (Ed.): "Az Egység Okmányai" (The Documents of Unity); Budapest; 1919; p. 5-6).

But the Revolutionary Governing Council made no attempt to remove from their posts in the state apparatus (the civil service, the armed forces, the police, the gendarmeries, etc.) the existing officials and officers:

"No one was removed from his position, although the agreement had stipulated the disarmament of the bourgeoisie". (M. Rákosi: Statement at Trial; 1935; in: "The Imprisonment and Defence of Mátyás Rákosi"; London; 1954; p. 143).

The Proclamation of the "Soviet Republic"

The first act of the new government, on March 21st., 1919, was to proclaim the establishment of the Hungarian "Soviet Republic".

Martial Law

On the night of March 21st./22nd., 1919 the Revolutionary Governing Council proclaimed martial law throughout the country. The administration of martial law was placed in the hands of a special Political Department of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, headed by Ottó Korvin, which proceeded to establish a security police modelled formally on the lines of the Cheka in the Russian Soviet Republic.

Although opponents of the regime put out much propaganda about the "savage" nature of the "Réd Terror" which existed under the "Soviet Republic", even former President Mihály Károlyi was compelled to admit that this was, in fact, "mild":

"The 'terror' was a mild one. ...

The courts-martial, composed of workers, passed four death sentences in Budapest and twenty-four in the country".

(M. Károlyi: "Memoirs: Faith without Illusion"; London; 1956; p. 173).

The RGC's Appeal

The "merger" agreement between the SDP and the CP had stressed:

"In order to ensure the complete authority of the proletariat and to make a stand against Entente imperialism, the fullest and closest military and spiritual alliance must be concluded with the Russian Soviet government". (ECs, HSDP and CPH: Joint Statement of March 21st., 1919, in: J. Weltner (Ed.): "As Egység Okmányai" (The Documents of Unity); Budapest; 1919; p. 5-6).

On March 22nd, 1919, the day after its formation, the Revolutionary Governing Council issued an appeal, entitled "To All", emphasising that the country's difficulties could be solved only by a "socialist" government which would seek a military alliance with Soviet Russia.

The Abolition of Titles and Ranks

On March 22nd., 1919 the RGC issued a decree abolishing titles and ranks.

Lenin's Misgivings about the "Soviet Republic"

On March 23rd., 1919 Lenin sent a radio message to Béla Kun expressing serious misgivings about the nature of the Hungarian "Soviet Republic":

"Please inform me what guarantees you have that the new Hungarian Government will actually be a communist, and not simply a socialist, government, i.e., one of traitor-socialists.

Have the Communists a majority in the government? When will the Congress of Soviets take place? What does the socialists' recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat really amount to? ...

I should like to know where you see real guarantees".
(V.I. Lenin: Radio Message to Béla Kun, March 23rd., 1919, in: "Collected Works", Volume 29; Moscow; 1974; p. 227).

Kun's reply gave a very misleading picture:

"The Hungarian Social Democratic Party centre and left wing accepted my platform. This platform strictly adheres to the principles of proletarian dictatorship and of the Soviet system. ...

The Socialist right wing - ... Ernő Garami, ... Gyula Peidl ... and ... (Manó - Ed.) Buchinger ... broke with the party without taking any followers with them. The very best forces that ever existed in the Hungarian workers' movement now participate in the government, which, since there are no real workers' and peasants' soviets, holds the power. ...

My personal influence over the Revolutionary Governing Council is such that the firm dictatorship of the proletariat will be exercised. Also, the masses are behind me".

(B. Kun: Radio Message to V.I. Lenin, March 26th., 1919, in: "Pravda" (Truth), March 28th., 1919, in: R.L. Tökés: "Béla Kun and the Hungarian Soviet Republic"; New York; 1967; p. 147-8).

It was on the basis of this communication from Kun that Lenin drew the incorrect conclusion that the Hungarian "Soviet" regime was a genuine one:

"Comrade Béla Kun's reply was quite satisfactory and dispelled all our doubts. ... It was only these Left Socialists, who sympathised with the Communists, and also people from the Centre, who formed the new government, while the Right Socialists, the traitor-socialists, ... left the Party and not a single worker followed them. ...

The bourgeoisie voluntarily surrendered power to the Communists of Hungary".

(V.I. Lenin: Communication on the Radio Negotiations with Béla Kun, March 1919, in: "Collected Works", Volume 29; Moscow; 1974; p. 242, 243).

Béla Kun's Note to Versailles

On March 24th., 1919 People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs Béla Kun despatched a Note to the Peace Conference at Versailles on behalf of the RGC. This emphasised the peaceful intentions of the Hungarian government towards all states and asked the conference to send a diplomatic mission to Budapest to open direct negotiations.

The Closure of Retail Shops

On March 24th., 1919 the People's Vice-Commissar for Socialisation, Gyula Hevesi, issued the most absurd decree of the "Soviet Republic"'s brief existence, all retail shops, with the exception of food shops, tobacconists and pharmacies, were ordered to close, and the death penalty prescribed for any retail commercial transactions outside these exempted fields.

The decree caused such chaos that it was sensibly repealed on the following day.

The Separation of Church and State

On March 25th., 1919 the RGC issued a decree separating the Church from the state, and formally guaranteeing freedom of religious worship.

The latter section of the decree was partly nullified in practice by the fact that the RGC gave its encouragement to an "anti-religious campaign", directed by a defrocked priest Oszkár Fáber, which involved the desecration of churches and the insulting of priests.

The Formation of the Red Army

The "merger" agreement between the SDP and the CP declared:

"The class army of the proletariat must be created immediately".
(ECs of HSDP and CPH: Joint Statement of March 21st., 1919, in: J. Weltner (Ed.): "Az Egység Okmányai" (The Documents of Unity); Budapest; 1919; p. 5-6).

On March 25th., 1919 the RGC issued a decree reorganising the existing army into the Red Army. All officers and men who were willing to continue to serve were permitted to do so, and since almost all the officers were drawn from the landlord class, they felt no loyalty to the "Soviet Republic".

"The Red Army, without the slightest formality, had admitted the officers of the old army into its ranks, and so the officers and their political opinions had remained the same as before".
(M. Rákosi: Statement at Trial, 1935, in: "The Imprisonment and Defence of Matyás Rákosi"; London; 1954; p. 153-4).

In an effort to check this position, Political Commissars were attached to all units with the aim of maintaining the "loyalty" of these officers. But, as will be discussed in the later section entitled "The Council Elections", these Political Commissars themselves were neither politically reliable nor competent. As a result the officer corps of the Red Army consistently betrayed the interests of the "Soviet Republic":

"In substance, the centre organism of the Red Army was counter-revolutionary. ... Every time the Red Army sustained a reverse this central organism spoke of it as a change for the better".
(M. Rákosi: Statement at Trial, 1935, in: "The Imprisonment and Defence of Matyás Rákosi"; London; 1954; p. 154).

The decree also established workers' battalions and regiments, to be based on each factory and to undergo training after work with arms stored in the factory, to function as a reserve for the Red Army.

The Establishment of Revolutionary Tribunals

On March 25th., 1919 the RGC issued a decree abolishing the existing courts and replacing them by revolutionary tribunals. These included, in addition to trained lawyers, lay assessors drawn from the working class.

The Establishment of the Red Guard

On March 26th., 1919 the government issued a decree merging the police and the gendarmerie into a single force, called the Red Guard, but without any significant change of personnel.

The Nationalisation of Banks, Insurance Companies and the Larger Industrial Enterprises

On March 26th., 1919 the RGC issued a decree nationalising all banks and insurance companies, together with all industrial, mining and transport enterprises employing more than 20 workers. Some 100,000 workers were employed in these nationalised enterprises.

Production Commissars were appointed by the government to direct each nationalised enterprise, and workers' councils were to be elected in each to "assist" the Production Commissar.

The decree also froze bank deposits, placing restrictions on the amount of withdrawals.

The nationalisation of industrial enterprises was, however, premature. Neither the Production Commissars appointed by the state, nor the workers' councils had the necessary experience of industrial management, and the decree was followed by a sharp fall in industrial production:

"In general the productivity of labour has fallen greatly. A little less in agriculture than in industry, but enormously in some branches of industry".

(J. Varga: Speech of June 16th., 1919, in: O. Jászi: "Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Hungary"; New York; 1969; p. 138).

"The effect of nationalisation was seriously to curtail industrial production, causing commodity shortages that turned both workers and peasants against the government".

(H. Gruber: "International Communism in the Era of Lenin"; New York; 1972; p. 121).

The New Banknotes

From the time of the nationalisation of the banks on March 26th., 1919, the RGC began printing banknotes, which were, in fact, reproductions on white paper of the "blue" banknotes issued by the Austro-Hungarian Bank. These were denounced by the bank in Vienna as "counterfeits", and, since the mass of the peasantry refused to accept them, this caused great problems in the purchase of food from the countryside:

"Instead of producing banknotes clearly identified as its own from the start, the office of the Commissariat of Finances proceeded with the production of reprints of the 1, 2, 25 and 200 crown-notes issued by the Austro-Hungarian Bank. These reprints were very crudely produced and immediately branded by Vienna as counterfeits. The farmers blatantly refused to accept the so-called 'white money'. ... Everybody else received their

salaries in this so-called white money, but could obtain nothing for it in the countryside".

(B. Szántó: "The Real Reason for the Collapse of the Hungarian Soviet Republic", in: "Die Internationale" (The International), Volume 1, No. 15/16; November 1st., 1919, in: H. Gruber (Ed.): "International Communism in the Era of Lenin"; New York; 1972; p. 135).

The Housing Decree

On March 27th., 1919 the RGC issued a decree nationalising blocks of flats, requisitioning all housing accommodation in excess of three rooms per family for the rehousing of homeless families and those in substandard accommodation, reducing rents by 20% and cancelling arrears of rent.

Under this decree, in Budapest alone 31,410 working class families (amounting to more than 100,000 people) were rehoused in requisitioned accommodation.

The Allied Blockade

On March 28th., 1919 the Allied Powers announced that they would continue the economic blockade of Hungary imposed during the World War.

The Education Decree

On March 29th., 1919 the RGC issued a decree nationalising all educational institutions (some 80% of elementary schools and 65% of secondary schools had been owned by the church) and establishing free compulsory education up to the age of 14.

A campaign was also undertaken against illiteracy, providing for the establishment of free evening courses in reading and writing for adults.

Other Social Measures

Among other social measures instituted by the RGC in March/April 1919 were:

- (1) the implementation of the law passed under the Károlyi regime establishing an 8-hour working day;
 - (2) the establishment of equal pay for equal work;
 - (3) the introduction of 6 weeks' maternity leave on full pay for women workers;
 - (4) the general raising of wages by 40%, the raising of overtime rates to time-and-a-half for the first two hours, and to double time for each subsequent hour, together with the introduction of a bonus of 20% for night work;
 - (5) the increasing of the produce traditionally allotted to agricultural workers by an average of 100%;
 - (6) the (mistaken) abolition of piecework systems in industry;
 - (7) the introduction of unemployment benefit;
 - and (8) the introduction of a state accident and sickness insurance scheme (compulsory for employed workers, voluntary for working peasants);
- during the first four weeks of disability, benefits amounted to 60% of wages, rising to 75% after the fourth week.

Cultural Measures

During the period of existence of the "Soviet Republic", the state organised many theatrical performances, concerts, art exhibitions and film shows for the working people of town and country.

Among the leading artists who participated in this cultural work were:

the poets Gyula Juhász and Árpád Tóth;

the writers Mihály Babits, Béla Balázs, Gyula Krúdy and Zsigmond Moricz;

the philosopher György Lukács;

the painters Róbert Berény and Bertalan Pór;

the sculptors Béni Ferenczy and Ferenc Medgyéssy;

and the composers Béla Bartók, Ernő Dohnányi and Zoltán Kodály.

The Constitution

On April 2nd., 1919 the Draft Constitution of the Hungarian "Soviet Republic" was published; it was modelled closely on that of Soviet Russia.

The Draft Constitution defined the state as "a Republic of Workers', Peasants' and Soldiers' Councils", in which "the working class held full political power", as "the dictatorship of the proletariat", and stated that its aim was "the construction of a socialist society":

"In establishing the Soviet Republic, the proletariat has taken into its hands ... full power for the purpose of doing away with the capitalistic order and the rule of the bourgeoisie and putting in its place the socialistic system of production and society. The dictatorship of the proletariat is, however, only a means to the destruction of all exploitation and class rule of whatever kind".

(Constitution of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, in: J. Pongrácz:

"A Forradalmi Kormányzótanács és a Népbiztosságok Rendeletei"

(The Revolutionary Governing Council and the Orders of the Commissariats); Volume 2; Budapest; 1919; in: H. Gruber (Ed.): "International Communism in the Era of Lenin"; New York; 1972; p. 123).

In pursuance of this aim, the state would take over all large- and medium-sized industrial, mining and transport enterprises, together with all financial institutions and insurance companies.

It would arm the workers, establish a Red Army as "the class army of the proletariat", and "disarm the exploiting classes".

The local organs of the state were to be Village and Town Councils, elected by the working people in each locality. These councils would elect delegates to constitute District Councils, and the latter would, in turn, elect delegates to a National Congress of Councils, which was to be the highest organ of the state.

The National Congress of Councils would elect a Governing Central Committee, to be the highest organ of the state between sessions of the congress and responsible to the latter.

The Governing Central Committee would elect the government, the Revolutionary Governing Council, which would be the highest organ of the state

between sessions of the Governing Central Committee; this government would be responsible both to the latter and to the National Congress of Councils.

The members of the Revolutionary Governing Council would be called People's Commissars, and each would head a department of state, called a People's Commissariat.

The Revolutionary Governing Council, the Governing Central Committee and the National Congress of Soviets would all have the power to issue decrees.

The franchise would be restricted to working people of both sexes over the age of eighteen - this term being defined to include pensioners, soldiers and those engaged in housework.

All citizens were guaranteed the right to work (or to state support if unemployed or incapacitated).

The working people were guaranteed the right to free education, together with freedom of speech, of press, of association, of assembly and of demonstration.

Racial or national oppression was outlawed, and national minorities were guaranteed the right to use their own language and to form councils for the promotion of their national culture. A contiguous area in which a majority of the inhabitants were of German or Russian nationality would constitute an autonomous national county.

The Appointment of Böhm as Commissar for War

On April 3rd., 1919, as a result of hostile demonstrations outside the headquarters of the People's Commissariat for War by left-wing soldiers, the former SPD leader József Pogány was forced to resign as Commissar for War. He was replaced by another former SPD leader, Vilmos Böhm, who also became Commander-in-Chief of the Red Army.

The Land Reform

On April 3rd., 1919 the RGC decreed the nationalisation of all land on estates in excess of 140 acres.

Both the Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party, before their "merger", had opposed the redistribution of land among the poor peasantry, contending that the large estates should be kept intact and farmed collectively.

Already, at the time of its formation, the RGC had stopped the redistribution of land being carried out under the Károlyi regime's land reform. With the passing of the RGC's own land decree, the nationalised land was not redistributed, but made available for collective farming only.

This caused bitter dissatisfaction among the poor peasantry:

"The Revolutionary Governing Council made a serious mistake in not distributing part of the appropriated land to the small plot holders and those who owned no land".
(J. Kende, L. Gecsényi and A. Steinbach: "Revolution in Hungary: 1918 and 1919", London; 1968; p. 35).

"The fact that the new land law did not make it possible for the landless to receive land evoked dissatisfaction in the countryside".
(Z.L. Nagy: "Revolution in Hungary (1918-1919)", in: E. Pamlényi (Ed.): "A History of Hungary"; London; 1975; p. 437).

"Another capital error was the fact that, unfortunately, we ... failed to distribute the large estates to the landless peasants. ... We began to organise agricultural cooperatives at a moment when the prerequisites for this were non-existent. ...

The Communist Party of Hungary realises that it committed a grave error when, at the time of the dictatorship, it did not distribute the land". (M. Rákosi: Statement at Trial, July 1926, in: "The Imprisonment and Defence of Mátyás Rákosi"; London; 1954; p. 42, 53).

The dissatisfaction of the poor peasantry was accentuated by the fact that the "collective farms" formed in this way were not genuine cooperative farms, since the state appointed a Production Commissar to manage each farm, and since this Production Commissar was in most cases, because of the shortage of peasants with experience of large-scale farming, either a former estate-owner or his steward:

"The regime needed experts to continue production, and the new managers could only have been the old owners and bailiffs. ... The peasantry was bitterly disappointed". (P. Kenez: "Coalition Politics in the Hungarian Soviet Republic", in: A.C. Janos and W.B. Slottman (Eds.): "Revolution in Perspective"; Berkeley; 1971; p. 79).

"Commissars of production were appointed to head the agricultural cooperatives that were formed in this manner. Since the new state did not have the necessary number of skilled men, these experts were appointed overwhelmingly from among the former owners, or the stewards who had previously managed the large estates". (Z.L. Nagy: *ibid.*; p. 436).

"The nationalisation of large estates, which were converted into collectives generally managed by the local gentry and their agents, who were the most experienced administrators, automatically made many peasants enemies of the regime". (H. Gruber: "International Communism in the Era of Lenin"; New York; 1972; p. 121).

The National Question

Like the Károlyi regime which preceded it, the Revolutionary Governing Council of the "Soviet Republic"

"..... was willing to grant local economic autonomy to nationality groups, except for the right of secession from Hungary". (R.L. Tökés: "Béla Kun and the Hungarian Soviet Republic"; New York; 1967; p. 144).

This policy alienated the oppressed part-nations within the Hungarian state from the Revolutionary Governing Council.

The Smuts Mission

There was a difference of opinion between the Allied Powers as to the response which ought to be made to the Hungarian government's Note of March 24th. The British and US delegations, led respectively by Prime Minister David Lloyd George and President Woodrow Wilson, favoured the sending of a diplomatic mission to Hungary authorised to make concessions to the "Soviet" government; they accepted at face value the propaganda of the Hungarian national capitalist class to the effect that the "socialist revolution"

in Hungary had been brought about by the offence to Hungarian national sentiment created by the demands put forward in the Vix note, and feared that the continued existence of the "Soviet" government in Budapest could only provoke the spread of "Bolshevism" through Central Europe:

"The Anglo-Saxon politicians, President Wilson and Prime Minister Lloyd George, blamed primarily the aspirations of the French military leaders, Marshal Foch and his circle, for what had happened in Hungary. It was their opinion that the establishment of the Soviet Republic was exclusively due to a violation of the nation's interests, and a protest against the unjustly exaggerated French demands. Wilson, Lloyd George and Clemenceau were equally and most deeply concerned that a soviet type of power had come into existence in Central Europe, and they feared the possibility of a similar political development in Austria, Germany and elsewhere".
(Z.L. Nagy: "Revolution in Hungary (1918-1919)", in E. Pamlényi (Ed.): "A History of Hungary"; London; 1975; p. 438-9).

The French delegation, on the other hand, favoured a negative response to the Note of June 24th., and the authorisation of an immediate invasion of Hungary by Romanian and Czechoslovak troops.

The British and US delegations enforced their views on the Peace Conference, and the South African General Jan Smuts was dispatched to Budapest, where he spent April 4-5th., 1919. The mere sending of the mission, which the Károlyi regime had been unable to obtain, was regarded as a success for Hungary:

"Within a week (after the formation of the 'Soviet' government - Ed.) the attitude in Paris towards Hungary had changed. ... The Peace Conference sent General Smuts to negotiate.

So what my Government had not been able to obtain in five months was granted to the Communists after a week".

(M. Károlyi: "Memoirs: Faith without Illusion"; London; 1956; p. 158).

Furthermore, the Smuts mission was authorised by the Peace Conference to make substantial concessions on the Vix demands, offering terms which Károlyi - expressing the viewpoint of the Hungarian national capitalists - described as "amazingly favourable", as terms which "should have been accepted without delay":

"The conditions which General Smuts offered were a marked improvement on those of the Vix ultimatum. The line to which the Hungarian troops had to withdraw was modified to our 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. The General would advise the Entente to have the representatives of Hungary invited to the Paris Conference, thus enabling them to put forward their point of view. ...

These amazingly favourable conditions should have been accepted without delay".

(M. Károlyi: *ibid.*; p. 158-9).

But Béla Kun had been a member of the "Left Communist" faction within the Russian Communist Party, headed by Nikolai Bukharin, which had fought against acceptance of the peace terms offered by the German imperialists at Brest-Litovsk in favour of a "revolutionary war" which the infant Soviet Republic was physically quite unable to carry out. Carrying forward this "leftist" line in Hungary, Kun rejected the terms offered by the Smuts mission:

"These amazingly favourable conditions ... were rejected by Béla Kun, who argued that they would mean a second Treaty of Brest-Litovsk". (M. Károlyi: *ibid.*; p. 159).

Kun based his rejection on a mistakenly exaggerated view of the contradictions between the Allied imperialist powers which, he told the National Congress of Councils in June, he felt had rendered Hungary safe from military intervention by, or with the approval of, the Allied Powers:

"We must point out the existence of major conflicts of interest among the states of the Entente. ... Because of the inner laws of imperialism, these states are compelled to fight among themselves. ...

Since Hungary is eminently suited for purposes of colonisation, ... it is certainly a prize that precludes any agreement by the Entente imperialists".

(B. Kun: Speech at National Congress of Councils, in: "A Tanácsok Országos Gyűlésének Naplója" (Proceedings of the National Congress of Councils); Budapest; 1919; in: R.L. Tökés: "Béla Kun and the Hungarian Soviet Republic"; New York; 1967; p. 189).

Nevertheless, at a session of the Revolutionary Governing Council on April 26th., 1919

"... Kun was forced to admit his mistake in refusing to negotiate seriously with the Entente. ... He offered his resignation". (R.L. Tökés; *ibid.*; p. 162).

The Council Elections

On April 7-10th., 1919 elections were held throughout the country to Village and Town Councils. They were carried out on the basis of a single list of candidates nominated by the Socialist Party of Hungary.

These Village and Town Councils then proceeded to elect delegates to the District Councils, and the latter, in turn, to the National Congress of Councils.

The councils at all levels were dominated by members of the former Social Democratic Party:

"The local soviets ... elected a Directory from their midst performing the functions of magistrate, mayor, judge, presiding judge. ... Since other qualified candidates were lacking, the very same leaders and secretaries of the old party and the trade unions were frequently elected to the Executive Committee of the Directory. Everybody has to admit that the administrative work performed by these soviets was not of a communist nature".

(B. Szántó: "The Real Reason for the Collapse of the Hungarian Soviet Republic", in: "Die Internationale" (The International), Volume 1, No. 15/16; November 1st., 1919; in: H. Gruber (Ed.): "International Communism in the Era of Lenin"; New York; 1972; p. 133-4).

In order to check the activity of these local councils, the People's Commissariat of the Interior appointed Political Commissars, attached to each local council:

"A political commissar with extensive power, appointed by the People's Commissariat of the Interior, was thus attached to every executive committee. ... It was the function of these political commissars to supervise the faithful execution of all decrees issued by the Soviet Government".

(B. Szántó: *ibid.*; p. 134).

These Political Commissars were, however, often incompetent to carry out their duties, it being the practice to regard everyone who had been a prisoner-of-war in Russia as reliable to perform such tasks:

"The office of the Commissariat of the Interior committed numerous blunders in that it seemed to view everyone who had demonstrably been a Russian prisoner of war as politically reliable and as serviceable in the department for political administration; due to the operation of this system totally incompetent and politically immature people were often dispatched as political commissars".
(B. Szántó: *ibid.*; p. 134).

The Formation of the Viennese Counter-Revolutionary Committee

On April 13th., 1918, with the backing of the British imperialists, émigré aristocrats established in Vienna the Viennese Counter-Revolutionary Committee, headed by Count István Bethlen.

On May 2nd, a group of army officers associated with this committee broke into the Hungarian Legation in Vienna and stole considerable quantities of Hungarian money.

The Invasion

Following the rejection of the new armistice terms offered by the Allied Powers through the Smuts mission, the British and US imperialists accepted the line of their French counterparts and resolved to approve an invasion of Hungary by Romanian and Czechoslovak troops.

The Romanian and Czechoslovak governments approved the new Allied plans on April 10th., but the French Commander-in-Chief in the Balkans, General Franchet d'Esperey, was unsuccessful in efforts to persuade the Yugoslav government to join in the invasion.

On April 16th., 1919, therefore, with the approval of the Entente, Romanian forces crossed the demarcation line into Hungarian territory from the south-east and, since the Hungarian Red Army was still in process of organisation, were able to advance rapidly.

The Revolutionary Governing Council immediately began to call up men of military age for the Red Army, and established an Eastern High Command, with the Commissar for War and Commander-in-Chief, Vilmos Böhm, as its Commander and Aurél Stromfeld as its Chief of Staff.

On April 23rd., 1919 Colonel Craenenbrock, the commander of the Székely (Transylvanian) Division, which formed the core of the Red Army on the Eastern Front, came to terms with the Romanian High Command and ordered the division to surrender. This created a grave position for the Red Army on this front, and it was forced to retreat to the river Tisza, which Romanian troops reached on May 2nd.

"The Szekler Division held more than half the front. When it surrendered, there could no longer be any question of serious resistance".
(M. Rákosi: Statement at Trial, 1935, in: "The Imprisonment and Defence of Matyás Rákosi"; London; 1954; p. 145).

Meanwhile, on April 23rd. Czechoslovak troops had invaded Hungary from the north, and quickly effected a junction with the Romanian forces in north-east Hungary.

The Health Service Decree

On May 1st., 1919 the RGC issued a decree nationalising all private hospitals, clinics, sanatoria and spas, and establishing a state health service with free medical and hospital care for all citizens.

The decree also established a school medical service, and a system of holidays for working class families and school-children. During the summer of 1919 more than 1,000 working class children spent a holiday on the shores of Lake Balaton.

The Trade Union Recruiting Campaign

On May 2nd., 1919, as Romanian troops reached the river Tisza, the 500-member Budapest Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies called on the trade unions of the capital to mobilise every available worker for the Red Army. Within ten days the campaign had succeeded in mobilising 500,000 workers into new units, which succeeded in halting the Romanian advance.

The Appointment of Stromfeld as Chief of Staff

On May 5th., 1919 Aurél Stromfeld was promoted from the post of Chief of Staff of the Eastern Red Army to that of Chief of Staff of the entire Red Army.

The Formation of the "National Government"

On May 5th., 1919, a number of aristocratic landlords and comprador capitalist politicians established at Arad, in south-eastern Hungary under French military occupation, a "National Government", headed by Count Gyula Károlyi (a cousin of Count Mihály Károlyi) as "Prime Minister". The "government" was backed by the French imperialists as a rival to the Viennese Counter-Revolutionary Committee established in Vienna on April 13th. with the backing of the British imperialists.

The "Minister of War" in the "National Government", Admiral Miklós Horthy, former Commander of the Austro-Hungarian Navy, proceeded to organise a "National Army", with its officers drawn from the old army and its rank-and-file recruited largely from the peasantry.

On June 2nd., 1919 the "National Government" moved its headquarters 100 km. to the east, to the city of Szeged, which was also under French military occupation.

The Red Army Offensive in the North

Having checked the Romanian advance, on May 20th., 1919 the Red Army, reinforced by the workers' units recruited by the trade unions, commenced a large-scale offensive against the invading Czechoslovak troops in the north, whose organisation and morale was weaker than that of the Romanian troops in the south-east.

By the end of May the Red Army had succeeded in driving a wedge between the Czechoslovak and Romanian forces, had driven the Czechoslovak troops from Hungarian soil and had begun to advance quickly into Slovakia, where it was greeted sympathetically by the population.

The Congress of the Association of Agricultural Labourers

Membership of the Association of Agricultural Workers had increased spectacularly since the end of the war - from 1,300 in 1917 to 40,000 by the end of 1918 and to 580,000 by the spring of 1919.

On June 1st.-2nd., 1919 the union held a congress, which denounced the failure of the Revolutionary Governing Council to distribute the land.

The Railway Strike and the Rural Uprisings

On June 1st., 1919 the Viennese Counter-Revolutionary Committee was successful in provoking a strike of railway workers on the Southern Railway, and a series of armed peasant uprisings in the Danube-Tisza area and in Southern Transdanubia. So far as the Vienna Committee was concerned, these actions had the aim of paralysing the rail communications of the Red Army and of seizing a piece of territory within Hungary that could serve as a base for further operations.

The Revolutionary Governing Council succeeded in ending the rail strike by granting substantial wage increases to all transport workers, and in crushing the uprisings by transferring Red Army units into the area.

The Clemenceau Note of June 7th.

As, in the first days of June 1919, the Red Army advanced into Slovakia, the Czechoslovak government appealed to the Allied Powers at the Peace Conference in Versailles for urgent assistance:

"The commanders of the Czechoslovak army and the Czechoslovak government were urging the immediate and effective intervention of the Peace Conference against the successfully advancing Red Army. They pointed out that if they did not receive reinforcements they would have to reckon with revolutionary uprisings in both Slovakia and Bohemia".

(Z.L. Nagy: "Revolution in Hungary (1918-1919)", in: E. Pamlényi (Ed.): "A History of Hungary"; London; 1975; p. 444).

The Allied Powers decided to respond to this request by means of diplomatic intervention:

"The Allied Powers ... decided to resort to diplomatic intervention in order to help the Czechoslovak bourgeoisie - who were in a critical situation as a result of the victorious Red Army campaign".

(J. Kende, L. Gecsényi and A. Steinbach: "Revolution in Hungary: 1918 and 1919"; London; 1968; p. 47).

On June 7th., 1919, therefore, the Peace Conference sent a Note to the RGC, signed by French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau, which

"... called on the government to halt its advance, and held out the prospect of an invitation for its representative to go to Paris for negotiations".

(Z.L. Nagy: *ibid.*; p. 445).

The RGC rejected the demand made in the Note, and the Red Army continued its advance into Slovakia.

The First Congress of the Hungarian Socialist Party

On June 12-13th., 1919 the First Congress of the Hungarian Socialist Party was held in Budapest, attended by 327 delegates.

Now that the "Soviet Regime" had fulfilled the purpose assigned to it by the Hungarian national capitalist class - that of frightening the Allied Powers into modifying the terms of the Vix ultimatum significantly to Hungary's advantage - its political representatives within the HSP - the former leaders of the SPD - began to turn, at first secretly, against both the "Soviet Regime" and the members of the former CP:

"Many of the secretaries, leaders and functionaries of the former Social Democratic Party and the trade unions suddenly began to oppose us in secret".

(B. Szántó: "The Real Reason for the Collapse of the Hungarian Soviet Republic", in: "Die Internationale" (The International), Volume 1, No. 15/16; November 1st., 1919; in: H. Gruber (Ed.): "International Communism in the Era of Lenin"; New York; 1972; p. 133).

"The right wing and the centre of the Social Democratic Party had the fixed idea that if they played their cards well they could liquidate the dictatorship of the proletariat. ...

The Social Democratic Party itself was thinking out ways and means of liquidating the dictatorship of the proletariat. ... In two places in his book, Böhm declares that he called the leaders of the Social Democratic Party together to discuss how to put an end to the dictatorship of the proletariat and to remove the Communists from power by force".

(M. Rákosi: Statement at Trial, 1935, in: "The Imprisonment and Defence of Mátyás Rákosi"; London; 1954; p. 146, 157).

At the party congress, the former leaders of the SDP turned openly against both the "Soviet Regime" and the former members of the CP, who

"... could count on only 60-90 delegates out of 327".

(P. Kenez: "Coalition Politics in the Hungarian Soviet Republic", in: A.C. Janos and W.B. Slottman (Eds.): "Revolution in Perspective"; Berkeley; 1971; p. 83).

"A debate over political methods dominated the congress of the united workers' party on 12th. and 13th. June. The differences between the Communists and the Social Democrats, which the merger of their parties only postponed but did not resolve, became increasingly apparent ... and led to violent debates and clashes of opinion during the discussions of the congress. One group of the Social Democratic leaders condemned the government's radical measures and demanded that they be moderated".

(Z.L. Nagy: "Revolution in Hungary (1918-1919)", in: E. Pámlényi (Ed.): "A History of Hungary"; London; 1975; p. 445).

"At the Party Congress in June, the Social Democratic opposition led by Zsigmond Kunfi ... tried to push the Communists into the background".

(Z.L. Nagy: "133 Days", in: "The New Hungarian Quarterly", Volume 10, No. 33; Spring 1969; p. 14).

A significant controversy which took place at the congress was over the name of the party.

In April the Executive Committee of the Communist International had written to the Executive Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Party saying:

"The Executive Committee Comintern expects your congress to ... decree that your party should bear the name of Communist Party".

(ECCI: Letter to Congress of Hungarian Communists, in: "Communist International", Volume 1, No. 1; May 1919; in: R.L. Tóké; "Béla Kun and the Hungarian Soviet Republic"; New York; 1967; p. 181)

and followed this up with a cable to the congress itself on June 12th.:

"The Executive Committee of the Communist International ... submit the name 'Hungarian United Communist Party' for your consideration".
(ECCI: Cable to 1st. Congress HSP, June 15th., 1919, in: R.L. Tökés: *ibid.*; p. 181).

The delegates who had formerly belonged to the SDP, however,

"... fought for the name of the party to be 'Party of Hungarian Socialists'".
(P. Kenez: *ibid.*; p. 73).

Eventually a compromise was reached, and the party was renamed the "Party of Hungarian Socialist-Communist Workers".

In the election for the Executive Committee of the party, the former SDP majority refused to accept the recommended list of candidates, which included four former CP members out of 13. Only when the former CP group threatened to leave the party (which the Hungarian national capitalists did not at this stage wish), did the congress reluctantly accept the original list:

"They (the former members of the CP - Ed.) suffered the most humiliating defeat on the election of the Executive Committee. The Congress refused to elect Communists (with the exception of Kun), and only when Kun and his old comrades threatened to break up the party did the Socialist leaders succeed in persuading the delegates to accept the original list which contained four Communists out of thirteen".
(P. Kenez: *ibid.*; p. 83).

"When the election results were communicated to the united party's leaders, it appeared that as the result of a massive anti-Communist write-in campaign, with the exception of Kun the Communists failed to receive enough votes to qualify them as members of the party executive. This was more than the Communists were prepared to accept. They announced that they would abandon the party unless the election results were voided and a united slate nominated. ... The originally proposed slate was restored and elected by acclamation by a most reluctant party congress".
(R.L. Tökés: "Béla Kun and the Hungarian Soviet Republic"; New York; 1967; p. 183-4).

The Clemenceau Note of June 13th.

Following the rejection of its Note of June 7th., on June 13th., 1919 the Peace Conference sent a further Note to the RGC, also signed by Clemenceau. This stated that if the Red Army withdrew from Slovakia,

"... Romanian troops would hand over the territories they had occupied east of the Tisza river".

(Z.L. Nagy: "Revolution in Hungary (1918-1919)", in: E. Pamlényi (Ed.): "A History of Hungary"; London; 1975; p. 445).

Meeting jointly with the Executive Committee of the Party of Hungarian Socialist-Communist Workers, the Revolutionary Governing Council decided to accept the terms of the Note, and notified the Peace Conference to this effect on June 14th.

The military leaders of the Red Army correctly opposed this decision on the grounds that the Note contained no guarantees that the Romanian troops would, in fact, withdraw from eastern Hungary:

"The decisions were taken before any guarantees were received from the great powers that the promises contained in the Clemenceau notes would be carried out. ...

The leaders of the dictatorship of the proletariat committed a grave mistake in ordering a one-sided withdrawal".

(J. Kende, L. Gecsényi and A. Steinbach: "Revolution in Hungary: 1918 and 1919"; London; 1968; p. 48).

In protest at the decision taken, Vilmos Böhm resigned as Commander-in-Chief of the Red Army (being succeeded by Jenö Landler), and Aurél Stromfeld resigned as its Chief of Staff (being succeeded by Ferenc Julier).

The National Congress of Councils

On June 14th.-23rd., 1919 the National Congress of Councils - elected indirectly from the election of April 7th. - met in Budapest, attended by 348 delegates, and guests from Austria, Czechoslovakia, Germany and Soviet Russia.

The main opposition at the congress came from rural delegates, who attacked the RGC particularly on an anti-Semitic basis (a majority of its members being of Jewish origin). As Béla Kun said indignantly at the congress:

"What is happening behind the front line, indeed at this very Congress, is open incitement for pogrom and counter-revolution. It happened here in this very hall yesterday that a hand-written pogrom leaflet was circulated. ... How can the Red Army fight and maintain its morale when at this National Congress of Councils, and even at the party congress, people agitate against the Jews and instigate pogroms?"

(B. Kun: Speech at National Congress of Councils, in: "A Tanácsok Országos Gyűlésének Naplója" (Records of the National Congress of Councils), June 21st., 1919; No. 8; Budapest; 1919; p. 22; in: A.C. Janos: "The Agrarian Opposition at the National Congress of Councils", in: A.C. Janos and W.B. Slottman: "Revolution in Perspective"; Berkeley; 1971; p. 96-7)

The congress heard and discussed reports on the economic, military and foreign policy situation; adopted the Constitution published in draft form on April 2nd.; elected a Governing Central Committee of 150 members; and, after a heated debate, approved the RGC's order to the Red Army to withdraw from Slovakia.

The Attempted Putsch in Austria

Faced with the fact that there was no prospect in the near future of effective military assistance from Soviet Russia, in mid-May 1919 Béla Kun sent Ernö Bettelheim to Vienna, charged with the task of "bringing about a socialist revolution and establishing a Soviet Republic" in Austria.

Bettelheim himself later described his mission as follows:

"The territory of Soviet Hungary was very small and extended only in a radius of 50 to 250 km. around Budapest. The fights in April had already indicated that even insignificant successes of the enemy could greatly endanger Budapest. The continuation of the war would have been impossible following the loss of Budapest, since the weapons and ammunition factories were concentrated in and around Budapest. This strategic situation imposed on the Hungarian Soviet Republic the duty to secure for itself an area of retreat in case Budapest were to be lost. In view of the then existing situation, such an area was only offered by Austria. There the whole military equipment of the past monarchy was stored. With Vienna and its mighty weapon and ammunition factories, the Hungarian troops could have

withdrawn behind the Danube and beyond even after the loss of Budapest. ...

The Bank of Issue of the old monarchy was located in Austria with all the technical equipment. The counter-revolutionary curse of the 'white money' would have been removed at one blow and the Hungarian peasantry would have been inseparably tied to the dictatorship by Austrian industrial goods. ...

Austria was not only the key to the salvation of the Hungarian dictatorship, but to the extension of the world revolution. If the Hungarian Red troops crossed the border of Czechoslovakia and at the same time declared the dictatorship in Austria, then a Czech revolution could safely be expected".

(E. Bettelheim: "The 'Bettelheimerei': A Contribution to the History of the Austrian CP", in: "Kommunismus" (Communism), Volume 2, No. 29/30; August 15th., 1921; in: H. Gruber (Ed.): "International Communism in the Era of Lenin"; New York; 1972; p. 196-7).

Following the elections in February, a coalition government formed from the Social Democratic Party and the Christian Socialist Party, headed by Karl Renner (SDP) as Chancellor, had taken office on March 15th.

The Communist Party of Austria, which had come into being at its foundation congress on February 9th., 1919 under the leadership of Elfriede Friedländer (later known as Ruth Fischer) and Franz Koritschoner, had influence chiefly among the unemployed and returned soldiers. The great mass of the organised workers - including the trade unions, the workers' councils and the para-military People's Militia - remained firmly under the leadership of the SDP.

The political position of the SDP-led workers' council movement was evidenced by the reply which the Executive Committee of the Austrian workers council movement made on March 23rd., 1919 to the appeal of the Hungarian Revolutionary Governing Council of the previous day:

"You have appealed to us to follow your example. We would do this wholeheartedly, but we cannot do so at this time. There is no more food in our country. Even our scarce bread rations depend entirely on the food trains sent by the Entente. For this reason, we are enslaved to the Entente. If we were to follow your advice today, the Entente capitalists would cut off our last provisions with cruel mercilessness and leave us to starvation. ... Our dependence on the Entente is total. ...

Long live international workers' solidarity!"
(Declaration of the Executive Committee of the Workers' Councils of German Austria, March 23rd., 1919, in: H. Gruber (Ed.): *ibid.*; p. 181-2).

The leadership of the Communist Party of Austria saw clearly that socialist revolution was impossible without the winning of the majority of the rank-and-file of the workers', peasants' and soldiers' councils to that cause by means of patient, persistent, organised Party work within the councils. A national conference of CPA members of workers' councils, held on May 4-5th., 1919, declared:

"The proletariat must ... reject bourgeois parliamentarism in order to carry through the transformation of the capitalist economic system into a communist one, and create an organisation for itself in order to consolidate all economic and political power in its hands. The only suitable form which makes this possible is the workers' and soldiers' councils and the councils of small peasants and proprietors.

It is therefore the duty of every communist ... to make this uniquely suitable institution completely acceptable through untiring, systematic struggle and tenacious endurance. ...

For us communists the only correct principle remains: 'The emancipation of the working class can only be the work of the workers themselves'. ...

The workers' councils are the only road to the dictatorship of the proletariat".

("Beschlüsse der ersten Delegiertenkonferenz der Kommunistischen Arbeiterräte Deutschösterreichs" (Resolutions of the First Delegate Conference of the Communist Workers' Councillors of German Austria); Vienna, 1919; in: H. Gruber (Ed.): *ibid.*; p. 183).

But Bettelheim had no time for this kind of "patient, persistent organised" work within the working class movement. He made himself out to be "an official emissary of the Communist International", charged with "organising the socialist revolution in Austria as soon as possible":

"In the middle of May Dr. Bettelheim arrived as Hungarian emissary in Vienna. He posed as a plenipotentiary of the Third International, with the alleged order to proclaim the Soviet Republic as soon as possible. In reality the Executive of the Communist International knew of Dr. Bettelheim - a fellow altogether new to the movement - as much as Dr. Bettelheim knew of the Communist International - that is, nothing. ...

Dr. Bettelheim's 'Moscow mandate' is either the product of the imagination of a young comrade unfamiliar with communism, or the swindle of an adventurer. ...

The world revolution can develop as a movement only if made by the proletariat of every country, not by 'emissaries'".
(K. Radek: "The Lessons of an Attempted Putsch: The Crisis in the German-Austrian Communist Party", in: "Kommunistische Räte-Korrespondenz" (Communist Councillors' Correspondence), Volume 1; November 20th., 1919; in: H. Gruber (Ed.): *ibid.*; p. 189, 190).

Then, in the name of the "Communist International", he proceeded to utilise the considerable financial resources with which he had been furnished from Budapest to by-pass the elected leadership of the CPA by organising a "Directorate" or "Committee of Four", headed by himself, which demanded the loyal obedience of all members of the party; this, in turn, proceeded to organise a series of "Action Committees" - for the unemployed, for returned soldiers, etc. - which demanded the obedience of all workers in their respective fields in order "to carry through the socialist revolution":

"Instead of organising the party, he (Bettelheim - Ed.) disorganised it by undermining the leadership and replacing it with a 'directorate'. ... Dr. Bettelheim let loose on Vienna a cohort of agitators who spent thousand-crown bills quite freely".
(K. Radek: *ibid.*; p. 192).

"Bettelheim used his ample financial resources to circumvent the CPA leadership in establishing anonymous action committees".
(H. Gruber: *ibid.*; p. 178-9).

On June 6th., 1919 the Allied Powers ordered that the para-military organisation of workers, the People's Militia, be reduced in numbers by 25%, and the "Council of Four" was successful in organising a number of demonstrations directed against this demand. Although the alarmed Austrian government was able to convince the Entente to rescind the order,

the "Committee of Four" decided on June 12th. that its limited success in mobilising workers and soldiers on this issue justified their fixing the "socialist revolution" for June 15th.:

"In the early-morning hours this meeting adopted unanimously the following resolution: The counter-revolutionary government has to be dispersed by force and the dictatorship proclaimed by the CP in the name of the proletariat. An armed demonstration of the proletariat and the military must be called for this purpose for June 15th. The directorate and the Revolutionary Soldiers' Committee declare themselves to be in permanent session".
(E. Bettelheim: *ibid.*; p. 198).

The detailed plans finally adopted by the "Committee of Four" provided for an uprising in the industrial area of Neunkirchen on June 14th.:

"Comrade Koritschoner travelled early on June 13th. to the industrial area of Neunkirchen ... with the aim of having the workers there seize power on June 14th. ... The proclamation of the proletarian dictatorship in the industrial area of Neunkirchen would have been decisive. Naturally, once the dictatorship had been proclaimed, a vast network had been prepared to announce it throughout Vienna".
(E. Bettelheim: *ibid.*; p. 199).

to be followed next day, June 15th., by an uprising in the capital.

Accordingly, Vienna was flooded with leaflets and posters, issued by the "Committee of Four" and the "Action Committees" which it controlled, calling for the "socialist revolution" to take place on June 15th.:

"The hour for the emancipation of the proletariat has come! ...

On Sunday the 15th. of June at 10 a.m. the revolutionary workers will demonstrate for the setting up of a soviet dictatorship, against hunger and exploitation, for social revolution!

Every member of the People's Militia has the duty to participate in this demonstration with weapon in hand. ...

Long live the Soviet Republic of German Austria!"
(Leaflet issued June 14th., 1919, in: H. Gruber (Ed.): *ibid.*; p. 183-4).

The Workers' Council in Vienna, led by the Social Democratic Party, responded on June 14th. with a directive to the capital's workers and soldiers to boycott what it described as an "attempted putsch":

"It is an act of violence which is being planned by this 'Committee of Four', with the Hungarian lieutenant Bettelheim (or Bernstein) as leader, a man completely unknown to the Viennese workers.

And that is why we are holding this 'Committee of Four' and its agents responsible from the start for any harm that can occur today....

Workers!

Do not let yourselves be used for an attempted putsch! ...

Remain aloof from the unscrupulous demonstrations of the communists!

Follow the orders of the Workers' Council. only!"

(National Board of Executives of the Vienna Workers' Councils:

Declaration of June 14th., 1919, in: H. Gruber (Ed.): *ibid.*; p. 185-6).

A section of the leadership of the Communist Party, including Elfriede Friedländer (Ruth Fischer), also opposed the attempted putsch. Bettelheim describes how:

"... Melcher, the former member of the directorate who had left demonstratively the meeting of June 12th., appeared in the barracks on the Selzergasse demanding that I call off the action, lest he announce early in the morning in the name of the CP that the demonstration of June 15th. had been called off. I made it clear to him that only the hitherto existing body was entitled to decide this question. Meanwhile it was announced that the founder of the party (Elfriede Friedländer - Ed.), together with a few outmanoeuvred careerists, was waiting downstairs for an answer. Melcher had become their spokesman. ...

In the afternoon (of June 14th. - Ed.) someone declared in the most widely circulated evening paper of Vienna, 'Der Abend', in the name of the CP, that the demonstration of June 15th. would not take place. All the careerists of the party, under the leadership of the founding lady, toured the military quarters in order to instigate the crowds against the demonstration".

(E. Bettelheim: *ibid.*; p. 200, 201).

"Had the German-Austrian Communist Party ... usurped 'power' by means of a putsch ... without the support of the majority of the proletariat, this 'victory' would merely have weakened the Hungarian Soviet Republic. A German-Austrian Soviet Republic a la Bettelheim would not have been a soviet republic at all. The councils were after all opposed to its proclamation. The trade unions were opposed to it. On whom could it have based itself? On enlisted Red Guards who would have been obliged to apply force against the majority of the working class? ... These simple reflections should have indicated to the Bettelheim people the madness of a putschist tactic. ... But this is precisely the crux of the matter: the messiah of the Budapest bureau of propaganda did not have a glimmer of the meaning of communism; every word of his charge against the German-Austrian Communist Party proves this. ...

The vanguard of the German-Austrian proletariat, the communists, frustrated during the June days the putschist tactic of the Bettelheims. They did not plunge themselves into the adventure of the 'proclamation' of the Soviet Republic without soviets".

(K. Radek: *ibid.*; p. 191, 194).

On June 13th., the government banned public meetings and demonstrations in the capital until further notice.

On the evening of June 14th., police arrested the members of the "Committee of Four" - except for Bettelheim, who escaped - and more than a hundred members of the "Action Committees".

On the morning of June 15th., some 7,000 people demonstrated in Vienna; the demonstrators were mostly unemployed workers and disabled returned soldiers; the members of the People's Militia and most organised workers obeyed their leaders' instructions not to take part. The demonstrators attempted to release their imprisoned leaders, and were dispersed by police with about twenty killed.

"The June action of the working class of Vienna had been defeated".

(J. Kende, L. Gecsényi and A. Steinbach: "Revolution in Hungary: 1918 and 1919"; London; 1968; p. 50).

The Establishment of the Slovak "Soviet Republic"

On June 16th., 1919, as the Hungarian Red Army had come to occupy a large part of Slovakia, a Slovak "Soviet Republic" was established at Eperjes, modelled on the lines of the Hungarian "Soviet Republic". Its Revolutionary Governing Council was headed by Antonin Janousek, head of the Czechoslovak section of the Hungarian Socialist Party, and a number of its People's Commissars - such as Ernö Pór as People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs and Tibor Szamuely as People's Commissar for Social Production - were seconded from the RGC in Budapest.

A proclamation by the RGC of the Slovak "Soviet Republic" declared that it would aim for union with a future Czech "Soviet Republic".

The Formation of the Council of National Economy

On June 21st., 1919 the RGC set up a Council of National Economy, headed by Jenö Varga as Chairman, with the function of regulating the economy of the country.

On July 9th. the GNE reinstated piecemeal rates in industry in an effort to secure increased industrial production.

The Attempted Coup of June 24th.

On June 24th., 1919 an attempt to overthrow the Revolutionary Governing Council by force took place in Budapest. Units of the Danube flotilla and the troops of one barracks in the capital took part in the attempted coup, which had been planned by József Haubrich, a former leader of the SDP who had been appointed commandant of the Red Guard in Budapest in April.

The plan was that workers in the capital would join the coup, after which the Red Guard would intervene "on their side". But the plan failed because the attempted coup aroused no support among the working class:

"The rebels had counted on being joined by the workers of the Budapest factories, but this did not happen".
(Z.L. Nagy: "Revolution in Hungary (1918-1919)", in: E. Pamlényi (Ed.): "A History of Hungary"; London; 1975; p. 447).

"The whole scheme failed ... due ... to the fact that the industrial workers ... never rallied to the counter-revolution".
(M. Rákosi: Statement at Trial, 1935; in: "The Imprisonment and Defence of Mátyás Rákosi"; London; 1954; p. 189).

In these circumstances, Haubrich refrained from showing his hand and ordered the Red Guard to suppress the rising - which it accomplished within a few hours.

The Negotiations in Vienna

On June 24th., 1919 Vilmos Böhm arrived in Vienna for discussions with the diplomats of the Allied Powers. A few days later he was joined by other leading members of the former Social Democratic Party.

In these discussions it was agreed that the Hungarian "Soviet Republic" should be liquidated as soon as possible, and that the Entente should put forward

"... the demand for the resignation of the Governing Council, the setting up of a new provisional government, consisting of trade union and labour leaders. ... Böhm and a number of the Social Democratic leaders recommended acceptance of these terms".
(Z.L. Nagy: "Revolution in Hungary (1918-1919)", in: E. Pamlényi (Ed.): "A History of Hungary"; London; 1975; p. 448).

"The Entente never stopped repeating that if the dictatorship of the proletariat fell, then they would help any democratic government which replaced it".

(M. Rákosi: Statement at Trial, 1935, in: "The Imprisonment and Defence of Mátyás Rákosi"; London; 1954; p. 159).

The Withdrawal from Slovakia

On June 30th., 1919 the Hungarian Red Army began its withdrawal from Slovakia.

The Slovak "Soviet Republic" was then immediately overthrown by troops of the Czechoslovak government.

The withdrawal adversely affected the morale of the working people, and especially that of the soldiers of the Red Army:

"The military evacuation of the northern regions resulted in a deterioration of morale both within the army and among the population. ... A number of the soldiers did not go to their new stations, but went home".
(Z.L. Nagy: "Revolution in Hungary (1918-1919)", in: E. Pamlényi (Ed.): "A History of Hungary"; London; 1975; p. 447).

"By the middle of July it had become painfully clear that the decision to retreat from Slovakia was a fatal strategic and tactical mistake. The withdrawal had irreparably damaged the national pride of the trade-union battalions, caused mass desertions from the Red Army, and induced the Czechoslovak army ... to pursue the dejected Hungarian units".

(R.L. Tökés: "Béla Kun and the Hungarian Soviet Republic"; New York; 1967, p. 200).

especially after, on July 2nd., the Romanian government

"... officially informed the Peace Conference that it refused to withdraw from the region east of the Tisza unless the Red Army was disarmed".

(Z.L. Nagy: *ibid.*; p. 447).

"The withdrawal of the Hungarian army and the Romanian government statement gave rise to bitter disappointment among the people of the country, and above all among the soldiers of the working class army. This unfavourable effect undoubtedly diminished the mass basis of support for the dictatorship of the proletariat".

(J. Kende, L. Gecsényi and A. Steinbach: "Revolution in Hungary: 1918 and 1919"; London; 1968; p. 48).

The Offensive against the Romanian Forces

On July 5th., 1919 the Revolutionary Governing Council approved a plan put forward by the new commanders of the Red Army for an offensive against the Romanian troops with the aim of driving them from the area east of the Tisza.

On July 11th., 1919 the RGC issued a decree imposing universal military service for the Red Army.

On July 20th., 1919 the Red Army launched its offensive, which was doomed before it began:

"I consider this (the offensive against the Romanian forces - Ed.) to have been a very serious mistake, because the same reasons that had decided us to evacuate Upper Hungary also forbade us to attack".
(M. Rákosi: Statement at Trial, 1935, in: "The Imprisonment and Defence of Mátyás Rákosi"; London; 1954; p. 159).

In fact, counter-revolutionary officers, headed by Chief of Staff Ferenc Julier, had passed the plans for the offensive to the Romanian High Command:

"The complete plan of battle of the Red Army had been delivered to the Romanians".
(M. Rákosi: *ibid.*; p. 159).

The Red Army's initial advance was halted on July 24th., and the Romanian army immediately launched a counter-offensive, causing the Red Army to disintegrate and permitting the Romanian forces to cross the Tisza:

"The Romanians ... had little difficulty in inflicting a defeat on us."
(M. Rákosi: *ibid.*; p. 159).

The Failure of the International Strike

The Executive Committee of the Communist International had called upon the workers of The Allied countries to carry out a political strike on July 21st., 1919 in solidarity with the Russian Soviet Republic and the Hungarian "Soviet Republic", and in protest at foreign military intervention against these states.

The social-democratic parties of the Second International, however, opposed the strike call, which met with little response:

"The leaders of the Second International, who supported the imperialist slaughter, broke the international protest strike".
(ECCI: Statement on the Fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, August 5th., 1919, in: J. Degras (Ed.): "The Communist International: Documents; 1919-1943", Volume 1; London; 1971; p. 64).

The failure of the international strike lowered still further the morale of the Hungarian workers and soldiers:

"21 July was awaited with great expectations in Hungary. ... As a result of the high hopes, the disappointment was all the greater when it was found that, although in numerous countries the workers demonstrated their solidarity, in Western Europe and particularly in the leading Entente countries the strike proved ineffectual".
(Z.L. Nagy: "Revolution in Hungary (1918-1919)", in: E. Pamlényi (Ed.): "A History of Hungary"; London; 1975; p. 448).

"The failure of the expected world strike was the last blow in defeating the spiritual strength of the proletariat".
(M. Rákosi: Statement at Trial, 1935, in: "The Imprisonment and Defence of Mátyás Rákosi"; London; 1954; p. 159).

The Failure to Secure Military Aid from Soviet Russia

During the first three months of 1919, the Soviet Russian Red Army made sweeping advances on the Ukrainian Front, under the command of Vladimir Antonov-Ovseenko, reaching the eastern border of Poland by mid-march. On March 19th. President Mihály Károlyi

"... informed the cabinet that in the judgment of the government's military experts it would be only a matter of weeks before the Russian Red Army would break through the Romanian lines and reach the eastern boundaries of Hungary".
(R.L. Tökés: "Béla Kun and the Hungarian Soviet Republic"; New York; 1967; p. 132).

Indeed, the threat of a military alliance between a "Soviet Hungary" and Soviet Russia was, as has been said, one of the motives for the formation of the Hungarian "Soviet Republic" by the national capitalist class.

As soon as the latter was formed, the government of Soviet Russia attempted to render it military aid. On March 25th., 1919 - four days after the formation of the Revolutionary Governing Council in Hungary - the Russian Soviet government requested Khristian Rakovsky, who had been appointed Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic on January 25th., 1919, to order the Ukrainian Red Army to cease its advance towards the Black Sea and Romania and

"... to advance westward to the border of south-eastern Galicia and Bessarabia. The latter was important in establishing immediate ties with the troops of the Hungarian Soviet Republic".
(V. Antonov-Ovseenko: "Zapiski o Grazhdanskoi Voine" (Notes on the Civil War), Volume 3; Moscow; 1933; p. 324)..

This request was ignored by Rakovsky.

On April 22nd., 1919 Lenin himself cabled to the Soviet Russian Commander-in-Chief, Joakhim Vatzetis:

"An advance into a part of Galicia and Bukovina is essential for the purpose of establishing contact with Soviet Hungary".
(V.I. Lenin: Telegram to J. Vatzetis, April 22nd., 1919, in: J.M. Meijer (Ed.): "The Trotsky Papers, 1917-1922", Volume 1; The Hague; 1964; p. 375).

On April 25th., 1919, by-passing both Rakovsky and Vatzetis, the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party sent an order directly to Antonov-Ovseenko, the Commander of the Ukrainian Front, to

"... establish direct contacts with Hungary".
(M. Gorky et al.: "Istoriya Grazhdanokoi Voiny" (History of the Civil War), Volume 4; Moscow; 1959; p. 71).

But still no serious attempt was made to link up with the Hungarian Red Army, and within the next fortnight the opportunity was lost.

On May 9th. the partisan forces under Ataman Grigoriev, who had joined up with the Soviet Russian Red Army on February 1st., changed sides again and began fighting the Ukrainian Red Army.

Taking advantage of the confused situation which followed, on May 17th. the white "Volunteer Army" under General Anton Denikin opened an offensive against the Ukrainian Red Army from the south, directed towards Kharkov which he took on June 24th. By the end of June the forces of Soviet Russia had been pushed back as far as Kiev.

By this time Béla Kun was convinced that the failure of the Soviet Russian Red Army to give effective military aid to the Hungarian Red Army was due to treachery on the part of Khristian Rakovsky, the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic, and Georgi Chicherin, the All-Russian People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, and telegraphed his suspicions to Lenin. Lenin replied at the end of June:

"Please do not worry too much, and do not despair. Your charges or suspicions against Chicherin and Rakovsky lack absolutely any foundations".
(V.I. Lenin: Letter to Béla Kun, June 1919, in: "Lenininsky Sbornik" (Lenin Miscellany), Volume 36; Moscow; 1959; p. 79).

On July 28th., 1919, when the "Soviet Republic" had only three days more to exist, Kun cabled to the Party of Hungarian Socialist-Communist Workers' representative in Moscow, Endre Rudnyánszky, for transmission to Lenin:

"I have already exceeded all limits of my patience regardless of Ch(icherin)'s and R(akovsky)'s supposedly harmonious cooperation with the party's Central Committee. I consider it a complete lack of cooperation that we were beaten by Romanian troops from the Bessarabian front".
(B. Kun: Cable to E. Rudnyánszky, July 28th., 1919, in: Institute for Party History, Central Committee, Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party: "A Magyar Munkásmozgalom Történetének Válogatott Dokumentumai" (Selected Documents from the History of the Hungarian Workers' Movement), Volume 6, Part 2; Budapest; 1960; p. 545-6).

Lenin replied on July 31st.:

"I assure Comrade Béla Kun that Rakovsky had been appointed by the full Central Committee and we are satisfied with him. We are doing everything possible to help our Hungarian friends, but our forces are small. Our victory in the Urals has liberated Hungarian prisoners-of-war, whom we shall transfer rapidly to the Ukrainian and Romanian fronts".
(V.I. Lenin: Cable to Béla Kun, July 31st., 1919, in: *ibid.*; p. 552).

But the next day the Revolutionary Governing Council resigned. And the Hungarian "Soviet Republic" ceased to exist.

That Kun's suspicions that Antonov-Ovseenko, Chicherin and Rakovsky were treacherously obstructing Soviet Russian military aid to the "Soviet Republic" of Hungary may not have been without foundation is evidenced by their history. All three came from aristocratic families, were Mensheviks until the eve of the socialist revolution in 1917, were during World War I closely associated with Trotsky on his Paris journal "Nashe Slovo" (Our Word), and, in the 1920s, were prominently associated with the opposition group headed by Trotsky.

The Clemenceau Note of July 26th.

On July 26th., 1919, in line with the discussions held in Vienna with Böhm and his social-democratic colleagues, the Allied Powers sent a Note to the RGC in Budapest, signed by French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau, declaring

"... that it refused to negotiate on any issue with the Governing Council".

(Z.L. Nagy: "Revolution in Hungary (1918-1919)", in: E. Pamlényi (Ed.): "A History of Hungary"; London; 1975; p. 448).

In Hungary, the former leaders of the Social Democratic Party now came out openly with the demand for the resignation of the Revolutionary Governing Council and by the end of July, assisted by the disintegration

of the Hungarian Red Army on the Romanian front, they had been successful in persuading a majority of the working class to this line:

"The Social Democratic Party, making use of the promises of the Entente, ... succeeded in persuading the workers that if the Soviet Republic were peacefully liquidated, it would mean democracy and the end of the blockade, and that the Allies would not tolerate a counter-revolution".

(M. Rákosi: Statement at Trial, 1935, in: "The Imprisonment and Defence of Mátyás Rákosi"; London; 1954; p. 171);

The Resignation of the Revolutionary Governing Council

By the end of July 1919 the Romanian troops had succeeded in crossing the river Tisza and were only 100 kilometres from Budapest.

On August 1st., 1919 a joint session of the Revolutionary Governing Council and the Central Committee of the Socialist-Communist Party of Hungary was held.

Béla Kun told the meeting that the position of the "Soviet" Republic was now hopeless:

"I have been forced to come to this cold, sobering conclusion: the dictatorship of the proletariat has been defeated, economically, militarily and politically".

(B. Kun: Speech to Joint Session of RGC and CC of S-CPH, August 1st., 1919, in: V. Böhm: "Két Forradalom Tüzében" (In the Crossfire of Two Revolutions), Vienna; 1923; in: R.L. Tókes: "Béla Kun and the Hungarian Soviet Republic"; New York; 1967; p. 203).

With typically "leftist" outlook, Kun blamed the defeat of the "Soviet" Republic on the Hungarian working class:

"The proletariat of Hungary betrayed not their leaders but themselves. ...

If there had been a class-conscious revolutionary proletariat, then the dictatorship of the proletariat would not have fallen in this way", (Ibid.; p. 203)

and called for a stiff dose of fascist white terror "to raise their political consciousness";

"This proletariat needs the most inhumane and cruel dictatorship of the bourgeoisie to become revolutionary". (Ibid.; p. 204).

A resolution was then adopted that the Revolutionary Governing Council should resign immediately, and the Budapest Central Workers' Council - still dominated by former members of the SPD - be asked to nominate a new government.

The Austrian social-democratic government gave Kun diplomatic immunity and he left the same day for Vienna in a special train with his family and a few friends:

"Kun ..., seizing the opportunity offered him by the Austrian Government of Otto Bauer, got into a special train with his family and friends and left for Vienna. ... Those of his colleagues who had no room on the train were left behind to the mercy of the Romanian and White Armies".

(M. Károlyi: "Memoirs: Faith without Illusion"; London; 1956; p. 172).

Among those who failed to escape was Tibor Szamuely, who committed suicide.

PART FIVE : THE PEIDL GOVERNMENT

(August 1st. - 7th., 1919)

The Formation of the Peidl Government

The Hungarian capitalist class considered that the dismantling of the principal measures effected by the "Soviet" government could be brought about by a government of social-democratic politicians and trade union leaders with less resistance from the working class than if this dismantling were carried out by a government of openly bourgeois politicians.

On August 1st., 1919, therefore, following the resignation of the Revolutionary Governing Council, the Budapest Central Workers' Council, which was dominated by social-democrats, was permitted to "appoint" a new government headed by the former leader of the right-wing faction of the SPD Gyula Peidl, and composed almost entirely of trade union leaders.

The Lifting of the Allied Blockade

On August 2nd., 1919 the Allied Powers agreed to lift their blockade of Hungary.

The Dismantling of the "Soviet" Measures

On August 2nd., 1919 the new government released all the political prisoners arrested under the "Soviet" Republic, abolished the revolutionary tribunals and restored the old law courts.

On August 3rd., 1919 the government dissolved the Red Guard and restored the old police force.

On August 4th., 1919 the blocks of flats nationalised by the "Soviet" government were handed back to their former owners, and the decrees of that government reducing rents were repealed.

On August 6th., 1919 all the industrial, commercial and financial institutions nationalised by the "Soviet" government were returned to their former owners.

The Romanian Occupation of Budapest

Meanwhile, on August 3rd., Romanian troops reached the capital, Budapest, and occupied it.

PART SIX : THE FRIEDRICH GOVERNMENT

(August 7th., 1919 - November 24th., 1919)

The Overthrow of the Peidl Government

On August 7th., 1919 the Peidl government was overthrown in a military coup by a group of army officers acting on behalf of a section of the landlord class closely linked with the former imperial family.

The officers proclaimed Archduke Josef State Governor of Hungary, and he in turn appointed a government headed by István Friedrich.

The Dissolution of the Szeged "Government"

A majority of the members of the "government" in Szeged were prepared to recognise the Friedrich government, and this "government" dissolved itself.

The more far-seeing members of the Szeged "government", however, realised that a regime associated with the former imperial family would be unacceptable to the Allied Powers. These members rallied round Admiral Miklós Horthy, who had held the post of Minister for War in the Szeged "government".

The Formation of an "Independent" High Command

On August 9th., 1919 Horthy announced that the "National Army" formed by the Szeged government and under his command - a force of some 25,000 with officers drawn from the landlord class and its rank-and-file mainly from the middle peasantry - constituted an armed force independent of the Friedrich government in Budapest.

Colonel Baron Antal Lehár, who commanded a similar armed force in the west of the country formed on the initiative of the Viennese Counter-Revolutionary Committee headed by Count István Bethlen, in turn placed his army under Horthy's supreme command.

Horthy was also supported by two fascist para-military organisations formed under the Károlyi regime. These were the Hungarian National Defence Force Association (Magyar Országos Véderő Egyesület) (MOVE) and the Association of Vigilant Hungarians (Ébredő Magyarok Egyesülete) (EME), both commanded by Captain Gyula Gömbös, who had been Under-Secretary of War in the Szeged government.

The Reconstitution of the Social Democratic Party

On August 24th., 1919 the Social Democratic Party was reconstituted under the leadership of Károly Peyer, a trade union leader who had been Minister of the Interior in the Peidl government.

The Resignation of Archduke Josef

On August 24th., 1919 Archduke Josef resigned as State Governor under the unremitting pressure of the Allied Powers.

The Withdrawal of Romanian Troops

The French imperialists, believing that they could convert Romania into a French client state, favoured the continued occupation by Romanian troops of as much of Hungarian territory as possible.

The British and US imperialists, however, not wishing to see the influence of their French rivals strengthened in this way, took their stand on "the independence of Hungary" and through their domination of the Allied Supreme Council, were successful in forcing the withdrawal of Romanian troops, which was completed by November, and gave their full backing to Horthy's counter-revolutionary forces.

The White Terror

On August 11th., 1919 Horthy's "National Army" started out from Szeged, marching through the north of the country not occupied by Romanian troops to join up with Lehar's army in the west, where Horthy established his military headquarters.

From here, the combined counter-revolutionary force proceeded to occupy the whole country as the Romanian troops withdrew, taking Budapest on November 16th.

The path of the force was marked by savage white terror and mass anti-Jewish pogroms. Within a few months 5,000 people had been brutally murdered, and 75,000 more were crammed into improvised concentration camps. More than 100,000 fled from the country to escape the terror.

The Peidl government had instructed all local organs and officials of the "Soviet Republic" to remain in office until further notice. Those who obeyed this instruction fell victim to the White Terror:

"On instruction of the Peidl Ministry, all local soviets and political commissariats were ordered to remain at their posts until further notice. In the interest of the general welfare this order was generally but reluctantly followed. These conscientious comrades were, a few days later, amidst horrible outrage and abuse, arrested by the officers' camarilla or tortured to death".

(B. Szántó: "The Real Reason for the Collapse of the Hungarian Soviet Republic", in: "Die Internationale" (The International), Volume 1, No. 15/16; November 1st., 1919; in: H. Gruber (Ed.): "International Communism in the Era of Lenin"; New York; 1972; p. 136).

The General Wage Cut

On August 17th., 1919 the National Federation of Hungarian Manufacturers imposed a 50% wage cut on all industrial workers.

PART SEVEN : THE HUSZÁR GOVERNMENT

(November 25th., 1919 - March 14th., 1920)

The Formation of the Huszár Government

On November 25th., 1919, following the occupation of Budapest by Horthy's counter-revolutionary troops, a new government was formed by these forces, headed by Károly Huszár.

The British diplomat Sir George Clark, who had arrived in Hungary on October 23rd., pressed Horthy to introduce a facade of "democracy" in Hungary, since the atrocities committed by his troops had caused some embarrassment to the British imperialists.

As a result of this intervention, the new government was drawn not only from the two newly-formed parties representing the interests of the landlord class - the Christian National Unity Party, led by Huszár, and the National Independence and '48 Farmers' Party ("Smallholders' Party"), led by István Nagyatádi Szabó; the Social Democratic Party, representing the interests of the national capitalist class, was permitted to take part in the government, its leader, Károly Peyer, being given the portfolio of Minister of Labour and Public Welfare.

On November 26th., 1919 the Supreme Allied Council recognised the Huszár government as the legitimate government of Hungary.

The Elections

On January 25-27th., 1920 parliamentary elections were held. However, the White Terror continued during the election campaign, effectively preventing the candidates of the Social Democratic Party from contesting the elections. As a result the party withdrew from the elections, and, in protest, from the government.

The 150 seats of the new parliament were thus divided between two political parties representing the interests of the landlord and comprador capitalist classes:

National Independence and '48 Farmers' Party ...	91 seats
Christian National Unity Party	59 seats

The Restoration of the Monarchy

On February 29th., 1920 legislation was passed by the new parliament restoring the monarchy, but leaving the post of monarch vacant.

The "Election" of Horthy as Regent

On March 1st., 1920 units of Horthy's "National Army" surrounded and occupied the parliament buildings, and demanded that the deputies elect Horthy as Regent of Hungary, which they duly did.

The Formation of the Simonyi-Semadam Government

On March 14th., 1920 a new coalition government of the two main political parties was formed, headed by Sándor Simonyi-Semadam as Prime Minister.

The Treaty of Trianon

On June 4th., 1920 the Simonyi-Semadam government signed the Peace Treaty of Trianon with the Allied Powers. This fixed the new boundaries of Hungary so as to leave the new "kingdom" an area of 35.9 thousand square miles (out of the area of 125.6 thousand square miles of the old kingdom) and a population of 7.6 million (out of the population of 20.9 million of the old kingdom); it provided for the payment of an unspecified sum in reparations; and it limited the armed forces of the new state to 35,000.

POSTSCRIPT : THE HORTHY SEMI-FASCIST REGIME

The semi-fascist regime under Horthy continued until October 1944.

Its character is described by modern revisionist historians with accuracy:

"A system of authoritarian dictatorship was brought about, in which the elements of fascism mingled with the legality of conservative and reactionary views. The liberal institutions were mere trappings. There was a parliamentarianism of sorts, but of a type in which the majority of representatives were tools in the hands of the leaders of the state apparatus. A multi-party system existed, but the supremacy of the government party was maintained by ruthless methods, resulting in what was virtually one-party rule. Certain civil rights, such as a limited suffrage and the freedom of assembly and organisation, were formally guaranteed, but their application and use was almost totally dependent on the whims of the police. ...

The police and gendarme terror was still reminiscent of the mentality of the counter-revolutionary armed detachments. The consolidated regime remained chauvinistic and aggressively irredentist. The official ideology, the so-called 'Szeged idea' (the counter-revolutionary movement started out from the town of Szeged), adorned with high-flown adjectives like 'Christian' and 'national', was conceived in the spirit of Hungarian supremacy. The ideology of cultural superiority and the idea of Hungarian political leadership in the Danube Valley, together with the savage persecution of liberalism, democracy and communism as 'alien to the Hungarian people', permeated the whole school system, the press and political life. ... Many citizens were ... barred from numerous areas of public life because of their Jewish faith, and the few Jewish students admitted to the universities were exposed to physical injury as the result of organised campaigns of harassment."

(E. Pamlényi (Ed.): "A History of Hungary"; London; 1975; p. 472-3).

It was with this semi-fascist state that, on December 22nd., 1921, the leaders of the Social Democratic Party signed a pact - the Bethlen-Peyer Pact, signed by Prime Minister Count István Bethlen and the leader of the SDP, Károly Peyer. Under this agreement the SDP was permitted restricted rights to function as an "opposition party" in return for the promise to support the regime at home and abroad.

APPENDIX : THE FATE OF BÉLA KUN

Following the collapse of the Hungarian "Soviet Republic", Béla Kun was interned in Austria until the summer of 1920. After his release, he went to the Soviet Union, where he remained until his death in 1939.

In the autumn of 1920, he took part, as a Political Commissar, in the last campaign of the Civil War, in the Crimea, against the whiteguard troops commanded by General Baron Pétra Wrangel.

In February 1921, Kun was coopted to the Little Bureau of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, and sent as the CI representative to Germany. Espousing the "leftist" "theory of the general offensive", he played the leading role there in the disastrous "March Action".

(These facets of Kun's political career are analysed in the CI report on "Revisionism in Germany: Part One", in: "COMpass",

Following his severe criticism by Lenin in connection with his role in Germany, he was then given a minor post in the Urals.

At the 4th. Congress of the Communist International, in February 1922, he resumed his place in the leadership of the CI. Thereafter he took an active part in all the congresses and most of the plenums of the CI. He was at various times member or candidate member of the ECCI, deputy member of its Presidium, member of its Organisational Bureau, head of its Agitprop Department, and wrote numerous pamphlets.

Béla Kun was arrested by the security police of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD) on May 30th., 1937 and executed on November 30th., 1939. His wife Irén was arrested on February 23rd., 1938 and sentenced to 8 years in a labour camp, his daughter Ágnes was dismissed from her position in a publishing house, and the latter's husband, the Hungarian poet Antal Hidas, was also confined in a labour camp until released in 1945.

On February 21st., 1956, shortly after the 20th. Congress of the CPSU, Kun was "rehabilitated" in an article in "Pravda" (Truth) written by the Hungarian Jenő Varga.

In March 1959 Irén Kun returned to Hungary.

On March 21st., 1964 a school and a street in Leningrad were named after Kun.

Despite his "rehabilitation", the new revisionist leaders - both of the Soviet Union and of Hungary - have been extremely reticent about the circumstances of Kun's arrest and execution.

The officially approved Soviet biography of Kun, by I.M. Granchak and M.F. Lbovich, merely states:

"The life of this fiery champion of the working class movement, of this distinguished figure in both the international and the Hungarian communist movement, was cut short on 30th., November 1939".

(I.M. Granchak and M.F. Lbovich: "Béla Kun"; Moscow; 1975; p. 149)

and the official revisionist history of Hungary is little more explicit:

"He became a victim of the Stalinist purges".

(E. Pamlényi (Ed.): "A History of Hungary"; London; 1975; p. 620).

Despite this reticence in Moscow and Budapest, most writers have attributed Kun's arrest and execution to Stalin:

"The murder of the Hungarian Communist leader Béla Kun may be regarded as a specially characteristic example of Stalin's mania for destruction".

(B. Levytsky: "The Uses of Terror: The Soviet Secret Service 1917-70"; London; 1971; p. 112).

"Stalin's homicidal fury in the Comintern ... was directed against both leaders and Party militants. ...

The foreign Communist groupings were wiped out by Stalin. ...

The Hungarian Communist leaders ... managed to escape the 'White terror' only to fall victim to Stalin's 'Red terror', ... among them Béla Kun".

(B. Lazitch: "Stalin's Massacre of the Foreign Communist Leaders", in: M.M. Drachkovitch and B. Lazitch: "The Comintern: Historical Highlights"; New York; 1966; p. 140, 161-2).

But even those who make this assumption are compelled to admit that Stalin had no rational motive for the elimination of Kun:

"Kun was no oppositionist, no adherent of Trotskyism or any other such movement, but a loyal supporter of Stalin".
(B. Levytsky: *ibid.*; p. 112).

"There could not have been an internal power struggle involved in the massacres described here, because the victims were foreigners and therefore ineligible as potential rivals of Stalin. ... Nor does the explanation that the purpose of the massacre was to get rid of the remaining Trotskyite, Zinovievist or Bukharinist elements suffice, for almost every foreign Communist leader arrested and killed by Stalin's police had in the past served Stalin against Trotsky, Zinoviev and Bukharin. ...

No exclusively political interpretation could explain why it was necessary to murder, along with their wives and children, Comintern leaders who had been in Stalin's service for many years".
(B. Lazitch: *ibid.*; p. 170-2)

and so are forced to resort to "explanations" based on Stalin's alleged "psychopathology":

"If we are to put a finger on the true reason for these massacres, ... we must seek a psychological, even psychopathological, approach .."
(B. Lazitch: *ibid.*; p. 172)

on Stalin's alleged

"... mania for destruction".
(B. Levytsky: *ibid.*; p. 112).

The fact that in the remaining sixteen years of his life unprejudiced and even hostile observers in close contact with Stalin found him to be eminently sane makes it difficult to take this "theory" seriously.

The facts of Kun's arrest and execution make sense, however, if it is understood that:

- (1) by 1937 Stalin and his fellow-Marxist-Leninists were in a minority in the leadership of both the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Communist International, which were dominated by (still partly concealed) revisionists;
- (2) at the 7th. Congress of the Communist International, its revisionist leadership, headed by Georgi Dimitrov, had diverted the CI on to a right revisionist course; and
- (3) Kun, with his long history of "leftism", was unable completely to accept this right revisionist line:

"Part of the leadership of the CPH, including Béla Kun, ... considered that it was unnecessary for the Communists of Hungary to make a change at once in the political line of the party (in accordance with the decisions of the 7th. Congress of the CI - Ed.)". (I.M. Granchak and M.F. Lbovich: *ibid.*; p. 146).

Not Stalin - who, according to all the evidence available, was opposed to the right revisionist line adopted by the 7th. Congress of the CI - but the (still partly concealed) revisionists who dominated the CI had the motive for wishing to see Kun eliminated from the Comintern apparatus. And since the Soviet security police was at this time headed by a (still concealed) member of the revisionist conspiracy, Nikolai Yezhov, they also had the opportunity to secure the physical liquidation of Kun and other foreign Communists in the Soviet Union who were unable completely to accept the new line.

The above interpretation is confirmed by the account published by Arvo Tuominen, then General Secretary of the Communist Party of Finland, of the proceedings of the commission set up by the leadership of the CI to examine "the case of Béla Kun". This commission was presided over by Georgi Dimitrov (Bulgaria), the "rapporteur" was Dmitri Manuilsky (Soviet Union), and its other members, besides Tuominen, were Wilhelm Florin (Germany), Klement Gottwald (Czechoslovakia), Otto Kuusinen (Finland), Wilhelm Pieck (Germany), Palmiro Togliatti (Italy) and Wang Ming (China) - all of whom later revealed themselves to be revisionists of long standing.

"As soon as the meeting had begun, the chairman, Georgi Dimitrov, announced brutally that it was to resolve the case of Béla Kun. The Secretary of the Comintern, Manuilsky, ... immediately began the reading of certain documents. After having read several pages, he demanded of 'Citizen' Béla Kun if he was familiar with these documents.

The term 'Citizen' employed by Manuilsky made Béla Kun start violently. The rest of us held our breath: the use of the word 'Citizen' in place of the term 'Comrade' signified in such circumstances a sentence of death.

Pale and upset, Béla Kun stammered:

'I am perfectly familiar with them. They are part of a circular written by myself and sent to the Communist activists of Hungary'.

'Very well!', said Manuilsky, and continued the reading of the letter. He read a passage in which the activity of the Comintern was severely criticised and attributed to the weak representation of the USSR in the Comintern. After reading this passage, Manuilsky turned once more towards Béla Kun:

'Has Citizen Béla Kun also written this passage?'

'Yes', replied Béla Kun with hesitation, for he sensed that something terrible awaited him.

'Very well!', said Manuilsky; 'Citizen Béla Kun must know that a representative of the USSR in the Comintern is Comrade Stalin'.
(A. Tuominen: "Kremls Klockor" (The Kremlin Chimes); Helsingfors; 1958; in: "Est et Ouest" (East and West), Volume 15, No. 293; February 1st./15th., 1963; p. 9).

Kun

"... roared like a mortally wounded lion:

'This is a terrible provocation, a conspiracy to get me murdered. But I swear that I have not wanted to insult Comrade Stalin. I want to explain everything to Comrade Stalin himself'".

(A. Tuominen: Article in: "Uusi Kuvaletti" (New Illustrated Magazine) No. 10/13, June 22nd., 1956; in: R. Conquest: "The Great Terror"; Harmondsworth; 1971; p. 579-80).

"When this duel had ended, Dimitrov shook a little bell and declared that the meeting was terminated. ... Béla Kun was allowed to leave".

(A. Tuominen: "Kremls Klockor" (The Kremlin Chimes); Helsingfors; 1958; in: "Est et Ouest" (East and West), Volume 15, No. 293; February 1st./15th., 1963; p. 9).

The biography of Kun officially approved by the Hungarian revisionists, by Béláné Kun, relates that a few days after this meeting Stalin telephoned and

"... asked Kun to receive a French reporter and refute a rumour of Kun's arrest".

(B. Kun: "Kun Béla" (Béla Kun); Budapest; 1966; in R. Conquest: *ibid.*; p. 580).

This he did and the denial was published. A few days later, on May 30th., 1937, Kun was arrested by the NKVD.

Clearly, either Stalin possessed a perverted and sadistic "sense of humour", for which there is no evidence, or the moves to eliminate Kun were not made on Stalin's initiative. Indeed, Stalin's telephone call may be seen as a move to make Kun's arrest by the revisionist majority more difficult.

Besides Kun, a number of other foreign Communists resident in the Soviet Union who - because of their firm Marxist-Leninist position or, more frequently, because of their consistent "leftist" position - were unable completely to accept the right revisionist line adopted at the 7th Congress of the CI were eliminated by the (still partly concealed) revisionist leaders of the CI in conjunction with the revisionist-led NKVD on the basis of similar trumped-up charges. To link these actions with the "personality cult" which they had built up around Stalin, the "charges" were not infrequently related to alleged "insults" of Stalin.

Other writers have given similar accounts to that cited by Tuominen of the Béla Kun "case" of the proceedings in relation to other such foreign Communists resident in the Soviet Union. For example

Herbert Wehner, then a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Germany living in Moscow, has described how the elimination of those leaders of the CPG who were unable completely to accept the political line of the 7th. Congress was carried out under the supervision of Palmiro Togliatti (Italy). In the case of Hermann Schubert, he relates:

"Hermann Schubert, who worked for the executive committee of Red Aid after being dropped from the party leadership, was preparing to take part in a debate organised by the Presidium of the ECCI, with a number of the organisations's officials present, when Ercoli (i.e., Togliatti - Ed.), who chaired the meeting, asked him whether it was true that he had expressed himself in the manner testified to in a letter written by Malke Schorr, an Austrian official of Red Aid. In the letter, which Ercoli read aloud then and there, the woman described a brief conversation she had had with Schubert in a corridor of the Red Aid building. She had drawn Schubert's attention to the fact that Red Aid should take advantage of the Moscow trials in its international propaganda, in particular of Trotsky's relations with the Nazis. Schubert had replied that this propaganda would not be effective, because the enemy could retort that Lenin had crossed Germany in a sealed car with the permission of the Kaiser's militarists. Malke Schorr insisted that measures be taken against Schubert, who had dared to put Lenin and Trotsky on an equal plane! Ercoli repeated his query and demanded that Schubert answer yes or no. Schubert wished to explain the circumstances of the conversation and the sense of his answer to Malke Schorr, but he was cut short. Soon afterwards, he was arrested".

(H. Wehner: "Erinnerungen" (Memoirs"; Bonn; 1957; p. 150).

It is clear that the generally accepted picture of "Stalinist terror" in the 1930s is very far from the true one.