

Hungary & Eastern Europe - Sixty Years Ago A Press Review by a Hungarian Refugee

Hungary Receiving Reactor
1956. 09. 16–30.

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Hungary Receiving Reactor

VIENNA, Sept. 19 (Reuters)—

The first delivery of apparatus and machinery for a Hungarian nuclear reactor has arrived from the Soviet Union, the Hungarian newspaper Szabad Nep reported yesterday. Soviet experts will help with assembly of the reactor.

June 23 1956



At last—the full story of
**Cardinal
Mindszenty's**
martyrdom—and of the
systematic destruction
of religion in
Communist Hungary

A detailed, intimate, authentic account based on underground reports made possible by men and women who risked their lives to get the information to us—despite terror and censorship. "A first rate book."—LUTHER NICHOLS, *San Francisco Examiner*. "A revealing book . . . factual and moving."—STERLING NORTH, *N. Y. World Telegram*.

IN SILENCE I SPEAK

By George N. Shuster

author of RELIGION BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN

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N.Y. Herald Trib. 24 IX 55

Hungary Reds Bid Nagy Recant

BUDAPEST, Hungary, Sept. 23 (AP).—Former Premier Imre Nagy, who introduced the Communist "new look" in Hungary in July, 1953, and then was ousted from the Premiership and the party in 1955, today was requested to recant.

The indication was that if he publicly confessed his "errors," he would be "rehabilitated" and accepted back into the party.

The bid to Nagy came from Maj. Gen. Sandor Nogradi, First Deputy Minister of Defense and member of the Communist party's Central Committee, in an article in the party newspaper "Szabad Nep."

He wrote: "The party wants to clarify and conclude the case of the party membership of Imre Nagy. . . . It is necessary that Imre Nagy should carry out his duty in criticizing his political mistakes, which he has not done yet."

Wash. Post 24 IX 216

Coal Lack Halts Hungarian Trains

BUDAPEST, Hungary, Sept. 26 (AP)—The Hungarian Railways announced today that 600 passenger trains were being discontinued "because of the extraordinarily grave coal situation."

The announcement said the restrictions will be in effect three weeks. It said that two daily trains still will operate in each direction on main lines.

The Communist Party newspaper Szabad Nep said: "Although our coal mines overfulfilled their quotas regularly this year, they cannot satisfy the fuel demands of the nation because oil production was reduced due to water in some fields."

Many bus lines restricted traffic several days ago because of a shortage of gasoline supplies.

N. Y. Herald Trib 28 IX 47

Tito Trip Dismays U. S., Jeopardizes More Aid

By Marguerite Higgins

WASHINGTON, Sept. 27.—

The United States government reacted with surprised dismay today to Yugoslav President Marshal Tito's unheard trip to Russia. Officials here said Marshal Tito's journey may jeopardize his country's chances of continuing to receive American aid.

The one point of unanimity concerning the Yugoslav President's sudden departure for the Russian vacation resort of Sochi in company with Soviet Communist party leader Nikita S. Khrushchev was that the trip was most decidedly not—as advertised—a vacation. It was believed most probably motivated by the apparent split within the Soviet bloc on the entire question of "Titoism."

It was concluded that the reasons for the trip must have been very urgent; otherwise, Marshal Tito, who has repeatedly expressed the desire to keep on good terms with the West, would not have left for Russia at the time when the entire question of continuing American aid is under review.

President Eisenhower is scheduled to decide by Oct. 16 whether this aid should be continued. The most important criterion is whether or not Marshal Tito has remained truly independent of the Kremlin.

A prevalent view in Washington was that Marshal Tito was called to Sochi—where most members of the Soviet Communist party's central committee have their vacation headquarters—to come to the ideological rescue of the two men who originated the rapprochement with Belgrade: Mr. Khrushchev (who had, coincidentally, just been "vacationing" in Yugoslavia) and Soviet Prime Minister Marshal Nikolai A. Bulganin.

Persistent reports reaching Washington in the last few weeks indicate that an anti-Tito faction in the Kremlin (probably including former Foreign Minister Viacheslav M. Molotov) had been accusing the Yugoslav leader of taking advantage of the rapprochement to soften up and mislead satellite nations into departing from the real Marxist-Leninist road,

and adopting a kind of mongrel leftism.

Marshal Tito has been specifically accused of having had a particularly malignant effect on the Polish delegations visiting Belgrade who have come away with ideas of nationalistic communism that do not suit the Kremlin.

In short, he has been making ideological life very difficult for his two most prominent sponsors, the team of Khrushchev and Bulganin.

The second thoughts about the wisdom of the rapprochement with Marshal Tito fit into the recent Soviet pattern of seeking to curb the chain of reaction growing out of the downgrading of the late Josef V. Stalin and the relaxation, limited as it was, of party discipline.

According to reports reaching Washington, there have been bitter complaints among old Stalin-line Communists that far too much has been conceded to Marshal Tito—including the political heads of some of the top Eastern European Communists, such as Matyas Rakosi, of Hungary—only to find that the Yugoslavs are working as persistently as ever to divert their eastern European comrades from the Soviet path.

Wash. Post 28 IX 56

Hungary Has Shortages In Metallic Industry

VIENNA, Austria, Sept. 27 (UP) Communist Hungary admitted today it has serious shortages in its metallic industry.

Ferenc Herczeg, Deputy Minister of Metallurgy and Machine Industry, told the Budapest newspaper Nepszava the target figures for 1956 will be only 76 per cent fulfilled. He blamed too high export figures and a lack of coke supplies from Poland as the main reasons for the shortages.

Wash. Post 29 IX 256

Lack of Fuel Halts Trucks In Hungary

Reuters

VIENNA, Sept. 28 — Shortages of fuel and steel are hitting Hungary's industry and transport.

Radio Budapest announced yesterday that because of the "extremely grave" fuel situation, workers in the coal and energy industry would have to work next Sunday and three further Sundays to help make up production.

Because of the shortage of oil, about 1000 heavy trucks and 500 buses are to be taken off the roads "temporarily," Lajos Bebrics, Minister of Transport, announced.

He confirmed reports that about 600 trans would also be taken off for a period of three weeks. He said the situation should improve by the beginning of October.

Russia meantime stepped in to aid Hungary. It was announced that she had promised Hungary 100,000 tons of oil over and above the amounts previously agreed under a trade agreement and also a further 70,000 tons of coke by the end of the year. Hungary will repay Russia with machine tools, textiles and wine.

Wash. Post 30 H 217

Magyars Talk Back Under 'New' Regime

Endre Marton is "revisiting" Hungary. The AP reporter never left the country, but he was behind prison bars 18 months for "espionage" while Hungary was still in the Stalinist era. A 44-year-old Hungarian, Marton was arrested in February, 1955, and sentenced to six years. He was freed Aug. 16. His wife, also a reporter, was released after serving six months of a three-year sentence on an espionage charge.

By Endre Marton

BUDAPEST—The mechanic installing my new telephone grumbled freely about his low wages.

"I don't care a damn who you are," he said. "I don't care if you are the party secretary. I give him a bit of my mind whenever it pleases me."

I asked him what the difference was between today and two years ago, and whether he was better off.

"Nuts," he answered. "I still have to work on Sundays privately to make both ends meet. But at least I can call a spade a spade without being afraid of having to face the music."

And that's a lot, believe me. Englishmen accustomed to the tradition of Sunday orators on a Hyde Park corner, or Americans who may criticize President Eisenhower whenever they feel like it, will hardly understand what it means to 10 million Magyars who apparently can grumble freely now, call names, decry authorities.

IN THE WEEKS since I first took a deep breath of warm summer air after leaving the grim building where I had been behind bars, I have been talking with Hungarians from all strata of life and trying to see with my own eyes the changes that have taken place while I was isolated from the world.

Some people may talk about indoctrination or brainwashing. But I approached the new situation with the skepticism of a Doubting Thomas. After weeks of reading the newspapers, listening to the radio, talking with the unknown little man on Budapest's streets, I have to admit:

Hungary of the autumn of 1956 is an entirely different country from the Hungary I "left" on a winter night in 1955. Of course, Hungary has not ceased to be a Communist country, but it is on the way to abolishing some Stalinist absurdities.

THERE IS MUCH pondering about the genuineness of the new trend. The question is whether the Communist re-

gimes of Hungary, the Soviet Union and the other "peoples' democracies" have any mental reservations about what they are doing; whether this is a tactical step which might be reversed at any time.

Who knows? Every meditation on sincerity is fruitless.

But no one should minimize the importance of new conditions which allow Judit Marassy, a Communist journalist, to assail the privileges of party bosses and their families. Her comment in the Literary Gazette, likely the most popular paper in Hungary today, drew a mild rebuke from the official party organ, Szabad Nep. She indignantly rejected the criticism and did not recant, as she certainly would have done in the Stalin era.

This is only one example. Budapest newspapers, state property without exception, resemble more and more the newspapers of the West. Criticism is a hackneyed feature of Communist journalism. It used to mean that newspaper could criticize lower authorities for not carrying out party decisions to a "T," or workers and farmers for not fulfilling and over-fulfilling party plans.

Today, criticism goes much further. Of course, it does not go so far that newspapers or members of Parliament would criticize communism as a doctrine, but they do criticize government decisions.

RECENTLY, a woman member of Parliament questioned a cabinet minister in the House. When the member considered the minister's answer unsatisfactory, the House sided with the woman member. Had someone told me in 1955 that this would happen,

I would have laughed in his face.

Some other random impressions I have gathered:

People no longer are addressed automatically as "comrade."

The Budapest Opera plays Bartok's "The Miraculous Mandarin," a pantomime banned from the stage by both the prewar and the Communist postwar regimes.

You can walk into one of the state-run bookshops and ask for Hemingway's "Old Man and the Sea" as if it were the most natural thing in the world that a non-Communist American's book had been translated and published here.

But you will ask in vain, because the book has been sold out.

People queue up for English, French and Italian movies. American films are too expensive, it is said.

Hungary's first King, St. Stephen, again was called a saint in the newspapers Aug. 20, his name day. Communist newspapers previously had called him Stephen I. Even God seems to have been "rehabilitated" by some Communist poets.

The shop windows are beginning to resemble shop windows in some Western cities. The former take-it-or-leave-it attitude of snubbing customers is fading away in government-owned stores. The shops offer a much wider variety of quality goods, and there are all kinds of imported goods, mostly from other Communist countries. Prices are still high.

Along with the freer atmosphere, two other things probably mean more than anything else.

The first is the abolition of

the "peace loan," an unpopular "voluntary" deduction which meant that the worker got 11 months' pay for 12 months' work. This appeal to the purse is highly important, especially in a country where wages lag behind prices.

The second is the possibility of travel. Once one had to be an official or a soccer star or a table tennis champion to get a passport. It was almost a miracle if someone could visit relatives even in other Communist countries.

But today, Hungarians may travel to Czechoslovakia or Romania without a passport and only with an extra identification card. Hundreds, if not thousands, including couples with no next-of-kin left behind as hostages, have been in Western countries.

A WELL-TO-DO friend not interested in politics toyed with the idea of remaining abroad when he got a pass some years ago.

"I feared they would never let me out again," he said when he returned.

Now he has just come back from another trip to the West—England—and I asked him if he had had the same temptation.

"Nonsense," he said, "what do I care who is on top? All I want is to have a salary big enough to live comfortably, to have a car (I've got one now) and to go abroad once or twice a year."

Even some "reactionaries" have wearied of passive resistance to Communism and may be content with breathing freely, or at least more freely, than before. Some of the reaction to communism is gone, whether one likes it or not.