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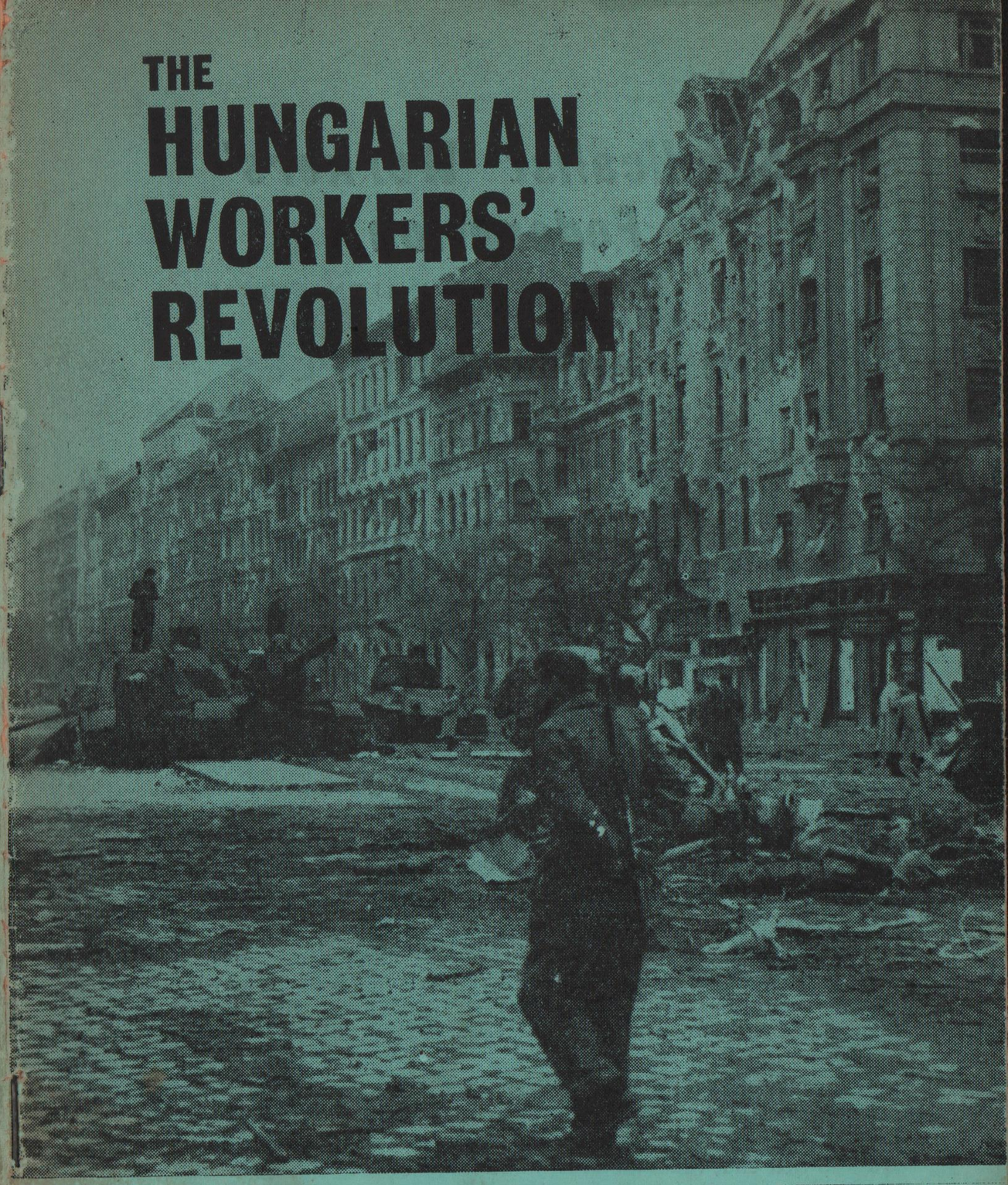
THE HUNGARIAN WORKERS' REVOLUTION



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SECOND EDITION, REVISED

Syndicalist Workers' Federation

BRITISH SECTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL WORKING MEN'S ASSOCIATION

AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

THE SYNDICALIST WORKERS' FEDERATION seeks to establish a free society, which will render impossible the growth of a privileged class and the exploitation of man by man. The SWF therefore advocates common ownership and workers' control of the land, industry and all means of production and distribution on the basis of voluntary co-operation. In such a society, the wage system, finance and money shall be abolished and goods produced and distributed not for profit, but according to human needs.

THE STATE The State in all its forms, embodying authority and privilege, is the enemy of the workers and cannot exist in a free, classless society. The SWF does not therefore hope to use the State to achieve a free society; it does not seek to obtain seats in the Cabinet or in Parliament. It aims at the abolition of the State. It actively opposes all war and militarism.

CLASS STRUGGLE The interests of the working class and those of the ruling class are directly opposed. The SWF is based on the inevitable day-to-day struggle of the workers against those who own and control the means of production and distribution, and will continue that struggle until common ownership and workers' control are achieved.

DIRECT ACTION Victory in the fight against class domination can be achieved only by the direct action and solidarity of the workers themselves. The SWF rejects all Parliamentary and similar activity as deflecting the workers from the class struggle into paths of class collaboration.

ORGANISATION To achieve a free, classless society the workers must organise. They must replace the hundreds of craft and general trade unions by syndicalist industrial unions. As an immediate step to that end, the SWF aids the formation of workers' committees in all factories, mines, offices, shipyards, mills and other places of work and their development into syndicates, federated nationally Such syndicates will be under direct rank-and-file control, with all delegates subject to immediate recall.

INTERNATIONALISM The SWF, as a section of the International Working Men's Association, stands firm for international working class solidarity.

The Hungarian Workers' Revolution

"The Central Council of the Hungarian Workers has issued a manifesto addressed to the workers. It says that against the terror of the Russian rulers, assisted by their Hungarian henchmen, there is only one thing to be done—to fight to the bitter end. It is a question of 'To be or not to be,' the statement adds.

"Because of the terror, however, and the death penalty even for distributing leaflets, the Council exhorts the workers to spread all news concerning the underground by word of mouth Sabotage and passive resistance are the order of the day. Strikes and go-slow tactics are recommended."

—The Times, 15.1.57.

★

THE spectacular return to the barricades of the early days of the Hungarian Revolution tended to obscure what was unquestionably its most important achievement—the spontaneous formation of workers' and peasants' councils, probably the first organisations in the history of Hungary to truly represent the interests and aspirations of the working-class. We believe that this development will prove to be the most momentous event in modern history—a signpost to the future not only of Hungary but of the whole of the Soviet-dominated world.

The Hungarian people did not want to return to a capitalist form of society—a fact admitted by the more honest sections of the British Press. Bruce Renton, writing in *The New Statesman and Nation* (17.11.56), commented that "Nobody who was in Hungary during the revolution could escape the overwhelming impression that the Hungarian people had no desire or intention to return to the capitalist system."

It was also borne out by the statements of non-Communist political and religious leaders. Bela Kovacs, the leader of the Smallholders' Party, who spent many years in Soviet concentration camps, declared: "No one must dream of going back to the world of counts, bankers and capitalists: that world is over once and for all." The Socialist leader Anna Kethly wrote: "Freed from one prison, let us not allow the country to become a prison of another colour. Let us watch over the factories, the mines and the land, which must remain in the hands of the people." Even Cardinal

Mindszenty declared: "No one fought in this national uprising against tyranny for the right to exploit the workers or peasants. What we are fighting for is to end eleven years of exploitation of these people by the Communists."

This fact alone is sufficient to make nonsense of the official Communist line that the workers (who, it is magnanimously admitted, had some justified grievances) were misled by Horthyite-fascists and reactionary capitalists sponsored by American dollars, though such elements obviously made what pitifully small capital they could out of the uprising. As for the allegations that the rebels were supplied with American arms, Peter Fryer, the young correspondent of the *Daily Worker*, which suppressed and distorted his dispatches from Hungary, causing him to resign from the paper, says in his book *Hungarian Tragedy*: "No one has yet been able to produce a single weapon manufactured in the West."

If a reversion to capitalism would never be accepted by the Hungarian workers and peasants, nothing is more certain than that, after eleven years of ruthless exploitation and betrayal, never again will even a substantial minority of the Hungarian working-class put their faith in the Communist Party. Even at the very summit of their popularity, in the general election of 1945, after the Nazis had been driven from the country by Russian troops, the Communists succeeded in gaining only 17 per cent of the people's votes. A further 17 per cent went to the Social Democrats and 56 per cent to the Smallholders' Party, whose overwhelming success underlines the important fact that Hungary is still largely a peasant community.

In January, 1957, it was reported that of the 800,000 former members of the Communist Party only 25,000 had joined the new Workers'-Peasants' Party founded by Janos Kadar; and at the time when his government was still pretending that it would hold free elections, Kadar made the astonishing admission that "We must envisage probable thorough defeat through elections."

The terroristic methods by which the Communist Party, with the shadow of the Red Army in the background, succeeded in dominating its numerically stronger partners in the post-war coalition government make revealing reading but cannot be dealt with here. It is sufficient to say that the Smallholders' Party was made illegal and that the Social-Democratic Party was submerged with the Communist Party in June, 1948. The "dictatorship of the proletariat" had begun! Peter Fryer speaks of "the absolute failure of the Hungarian Communist Party, after eight years in complete control of their country, to give the people either happiness or security, either freedom from want or freedom from fear . . . The Communist leaders promised the people an earthly paradise and gave them a police state as repressive and as reprehensible as the

pre-war fascist dictatorship of Admiral Horthy."

Add to this their realisation that their real masters were not even Hungarians, but Russians, of the same kind as those brutal oppressors who, a hundred years before, had answered the appeal of Hungary's Hapsburg rulers to assist them in crushing their glorious revolution, and it is small wonder that they rose at last, almost to a child, to shake off their yoke.

Workers lead the way

FROM the first, intellectuals and students played a vital role in expressing the seething discontent of the whole people.

Discussion circles, named after the great lyric poet Sandor Petöfi and Lajos Kossuth, the revolutionary leader, both of whom fought for Hungarian freedom in 1848-9, were formed in Budapest and other cities. These circles recall strongly to mind the revolutionary circles which played such an important part in undermining the Czarist regime and in preparing the way for the Russian Revolution. Students began to demand the abolition of compulsory lectures in Marxist-Leninist doctrines and said that they should be allowed to study Western languages instead of Russian.

On October 22, 1956, students at the Budapest Polytechnic Institute drew up a 14-point manifesto. Among other concessions, the students demanded: (1) a national congress of the Communist Party to elect new leaders by secret ballot; (2) the constitution of a new government under Imre Nagy, the former premier who was expelled from the Communist Party for deviationism; (3) the immediate withdrawal of all Soviet troops from Hungary; (4) free elections, with the right of other parties besides the Communist Party to put up candidates. Other demands were for freedom of speech and the Press, the ending of the exaction of compulsory quotas of farm produce from the peasants, the release of Hungarian prisoners-of-war and civilians held in Russia, and the retrial in open court of all persons serving sentences for political or economic offences.

At noon on October 23, a mass meeting was held in the university park, attended by student delegates from other faculties and several workers' delegations from nearby factories. At 3 p.m., ignoring the Minister of the Interior's refusal for permission to demonstrate, the students began to march along the banks of the Danube, their ranks constantly swelled by ordinary citizens. It is estimated that 10,000 people came out into the streets to demonstrate. Outside the Parliament buildings in Kossuth Square the crowd shouted for Nagy, who, when he did appear at last, could do no more than appeal for calm. At the foot of the statue of Josef Bem, the Polish

general who fought for the Hungarians in the Revolution of 1848-9, students demonstrated their solidarity with the Polish people's struggle for independence from Russia, recalling the words of Petöfi:

Our battalions have combined two nations,
And what nations! Polish and Magyar!
Is there any destiny that is stronger
Than those two when they are united?

From the monument to Petöfi, where the medical students were demonstrating, a student recited the poem Petöfi himself had written to incite his countrymen to rise:

By the God of our Hungary we swear
We shall be slaves nevermore.

Erno Gero, the Stalinist Party Secretary, broadcast a speech calling the demonstrators counter-revolutionaries and declaring that "the Soviet Union must continue to be treated by us with respect as the liberator of Hungary." The so-called "counter-revolutionaries" replied by demolishing a 26-foot bronze statue of Stalin and destroying every Red Star in sight.

Towards evening, the main body of demonstrators had converged on the radio station, where they demanded that the student manifesto should be broadcast. The building was packed with 300 men of the AVH (*Allamvedelmi Hatosagnom*) who opened fire on the crowd. The people's long-smouldering hatred of the political police burst into a wild flame, and soon they were hunting them through the streets and lynching those luckless enough not to be killed by rebel bullets.

The sympathy of the Hungarian Army for at least the initial aims of the rebels was never in doubt. Lorry-loads of soldiers sent to assist the AVH in defending the radio station handed their arms to the demonstrators. And it was not long before Hungarian soldiers were themselves fighting alongside Freedom Fighters.

George Sherman, in his story of the first triumphant days of the revolution pieced together from the first-hand accounts of refugees (*The Observer*, 11.11.56), quoted these words from a 17-year-old girl student who took part in the demonstration outside the Parliament buildings:

> "For weeks we had been talking about reforms—at first educational, and then more and more political and economic. We were peaceful. We only wanted to better the lot of the students. *No one thought it would end in revolution.* We sang our National Anthem and then put out the Red Star which shone on top of the Parliament."

The revolution spread like a bush fire across the length and breadth of Hungary. In Magyarovar, where the AVH machine-gunned a demonstration of 5,000 men, women and children, massacring more than 80 people, the people took a terrible revenge, lynching all the officers who survived the battle which followed.

Revolutionary committees of delegates elected by factories and mines, colleges and military units, took over the administration of almost every town in Hungary. From some, freedom radio stations broadcast caustic comments on the political manœuvrings in Budapest. Györ radio described Nagy as a "tool of the Communists" and Miskolc radio urged the Budapest students to disregard Government exhortations to give up their arms.

But the chief centres of resistance outside Budapest were almost certainly the mining and industrial towns, like Varpalota, Dunpentele, Tatabanya and Pecs. The miners of Pecs, where some of the fiercest fighting took place, had a particular grievance of their own in that their toil in the uranium mines had been solely for the benefit of their Russian overlords.

It was the rising of the workers which turned the revolt into a revolution. If the students were at first the voice of the revolution, expressing its spirit and its initial purpose, the workers were, as they always must be, its backbone. A 21-year-old worker in the huge United Electric factory in Ujpest, an industrial suburb of Budapest, told Sherman:

> "On Wednesday morning the revolt began in our factory. It was unorganised and spontaneous. If it had been organised, the AVH would have known and stopped it before it started. The young workers led the way and everyone followed them. Yes, it was the young workers who made the revolution against Communism—the workers on whom the whole system was supposed to be based."

And George Sherman reported: "A 28-year-old refugee who had fought alongside these workers tersely summed up their role in the revolution:

> " 'The young workers were the power of the revolution. The students began it, but when it developed they did not have the numbers or the ability to fight as hard as those young workers.' "

As Peter Fryer testified: "It was the proletariat of Hungary, above all, that fought the tanks which came to destroy the revolutionary order they had already established in the shape of workers' councils."

All honour to the youth of Hungary, whether students or workers, who fought side by side in the streets of Budapest against the Russian tanks, called in by Hungarian politicians who described themselves as "men of the people" to crush the spring-flower of the people's freedom.

Whether or not Imre Nagy, who became premier on the second day of the revolution, was responsible for the appeal for Russian tanks to bolster the tottering Communist regime is of little im-

portance. At no time during the revolutionary period were the politicians in control of the situation. Nagy and Kadar, who replaced him after the second Soviet assault on Budapest, were mere puppets. But all politicians are shown to be men of straw when the workers realise their united strength and march resolutely towards a common goal. Even Stalin, "the man of steel", would have proved so, and the leaders of the Kremlin will fall like ninepins when the Russian workers rise.

While the first Russian assault failed, the helpless Hungarian authorities made a futile attempt to frustrate the workers' own initiative by offering concessions:

> "From October 28, 1956 . . . Imre Nagy recognised the existence of a power stemming directly from the people: ' . . . the government is adopting the new democratic forms which have arisen from the people's initiative and will endeavour to incorporate them in the State administration'—Talk on Budapest Radio, 28.10.56 at 5.24 p.m.
>
> "What does this statement mean? Quite simply that the central governing power has no longer any authority and that factories, public services, offices, villages, whole regions have spontaneously created their own organisations.
>
> "In fact, manifestoes and proclamations from different parts of the country show that revolutionary committees exist in the provinces of Borsod, Baranya, Szatmar, Vezsprem, Szabolcs; that 'national' committees are functioning in the provinces of Vas, Zala, Gyor and Sopron; that other committees are working in most of the towns, the different districts of Budapest and its suburbs.
>
> "On the evening of October 28, these various committees sought to co-ordinate their efforts by forming a National Committee. At provincial and district level, the same tendency prevailed for linking together these natural bodies, born of the absence and impotence of centralised power, to fulfil the essential needs of social life and armed struggle."—*Pourquoi et Comment se bat la Hongrie Ouvrière* (Union des Syndicalistes, Paris, 1956).

"My friends, it is I, Imre Nagy, who have chased these Russians out," crowed the pathetic little man with the walrus moustache, while the flower of Hungarian youth fought and died on the barricades.

The Red Army, its tanks short of fuel, their crews short of food and mutinous, withdrew from the city, only to return four days later on November 4 with fresh "untainted" troops and in overwhelming strength. A thousand tanks are reported to have taken part in the second assault on Budapest, firing blindly, shelling buildings indiscriminately and at point-blank range. Lajos

Lederer, Hungarian-born correspondent of *The Observer*, reported that in some parts of the city the devastation was greater than in Coventry after the heavy bombing, and Peter Fryer stated that "vast areas of the city—the working-class areas above all—are virtually in ruins."

But house by house, street by street, the Freedom Fighters fought the invaders. In one night battle watched by Lederer more than thirty tanks were destroyed. "After that," he said, "the Soviet tanks never stayed in the centre of the city at night. Every night, before midnight, they moved out, to come back at dawn."

Twice the world gave up for lost the cause of Hungarian freedom: when Soviet tanks first went into action and when they returned in far greater numbers. For many the struggle for freedom ended with death in the gutter. One report gave the number of Hungarian dead as 25,000—yet who would dare to say that they had not chosen life? Well over 100,000 people fled across the border into Austria. But the revolution did not end with the end of most of the fighting. Thousands of rebels hid their arms and joined in a general strike the like of which the world has never seen before. It is impossible to pay too high a tribute to the endurance, faith and courage of the Hungarian people. They showed the world that nearly forty years of terror and deceit—first under Fascism and then under Communism—cannot quench the spirit of freedom.

Despite the mass arrests, trials by court-martial, executions and deportations of Hungarian youth, the union of university students was, in January, 1957, still openly demanding the fulfilment of its manifesto of October 22, with the consequence that the entire Budapest Student Revolutionary Committee was arrested, while the imprisonment of scores of militant members of the Workers' Councils, which refused to "co-operate" with the Kadar spittle-lickers, had completely failed to bring the workers to heel. "The waves of arbitrary arrests continue. Four hundred members of former revolutionary councils are in prison. During the last week there have been a number of judges who have resigned in protest against what they called the farce of this jurisdiction" (*The Times*, 21.1.57).

While all non-Communist accounts (as well as a good many Communist ones, too) agreed that the uprising was unorganised, how hard it is for those brought up in the comfortable public-school philosophy of bourgeois democracy to understand such a spontaneous movement of the people as shown by this typical comment from Boris Kidel (*News Chronicle*, 29.10.56): "The people . . . appear confused as to how to make use of their newly-won freedom. And they lack leaders and officials to take charge."

That the revolution had no leaders who could claim to speak for

the country as a whole was not a sign of weakness but of strength, for while it is not too difficult to execute a few leaders, it is very difficult to execute a whole people; and a people who do not put their trust in leaders cannot be betrayed by leaders. As H. G. Wells once said: "Grown men do not need leaders." Nor should the absence of national leaders be taken as a sign of disunity, for from the beginning the people spoke with one voice on the fundamental issues of the revolution.

Workers' Councils supreme

THE day before the Revolution, the workers of Hungary were organised in State trade unions, patterned on the Russian State unions and the Nazi Labour Front. These were controlled by the Communist Party and, it seemed to the outside world, completely subjugated. But on the day of the Revolution, the Hungarian workers went into action, brushing aside these unions and their Communist officials and, from necessity, forming their own organisations.

What form did the revolutionary organisation take? Certainly not that of trade unionism so well known to us—sick benefits, homes of rest, funeral funds, worker-employer collaboration and parliamentary politics. The basis of the organisation was the meeting of the workers at their workplace—the factory, pit or railway depot. From these, committees of known and trusted workers were formed. The next day, the linking together of these committees by industry, by district and nationally, followed quickly: "It is quite extraordinary to note how these councils, born spontaneously in different regions, partially isolated by the Russian armies, immediately sought to federate themselves. At the end of the first revolutionary week they tended to form a republic of councils."—*L'Insurrection Hongroise* (Socialisme ou Barbarie, Paris, 1957).

The seeming disadvantages of the situation were turned to advantage. Because the unions were completely Communist controlled, they were incapable of creating illusion. Had they been half Communist and half wishy-washy, they might have confused and caused hesitation among weaker brethren. Because only Communist propaganda was allowed, no publicity blown-up personalities were on hand to capitalise the crisis. The workers had to start by picking, from their own ranks, those they knew and could trust, and they had to start on an industrial basis. It is the dilemma of capitalism and its ugly offspring, Fascism and Bolshevism, that, while they seek to destroy working-class organisation, they must herd the workers into industrial units of production, where rebel

slaves may again organise against their masters. Ironically enough Marx recognised this:

> "Modern industry has converted the little workshop of the patriarchal master into the great factory of the industrial capitalist. Masses of labourers, crowded into the factory, are organised like soldiers. As privates of the industrial army, they are placed under the command of a perfect hierarchy of officers and sergeants."—*Communist Manifesto,* 1848.

At once, the Communist officers fled to the shelter of the Russian Army, while the industrial workers formed their organisation—on the spot.

Need and circumstance, if not design, indicated to the revolutionary workers the Syndicalist principle of organisation. The overwhelming importance of the workers as a factor in the Hungarian Revolution gave a special character to the revolt of the people and made it a Social Revolution. The workers, while abhorring Stalinism, would never be willing to go back to capitalism.

But the principles of social revolution thus introduced were not only social aims and aspirations, they were weapons of revolt. Denied the use of tanks, aircraft and heavy artillery, the revolution creates its own weapons, which are denied to the enemy.

The workshop committees did more than organise units of the Freedom Fighters. They organised essential supplies. Miners dug coal for hospitals and workers' homes, bakeries and flour mills organised bread distribution, transport workers moved foodstuffs, public service workers maintained health services and factories, repaired the scant store of arms available to the rebels and improvised weapons.

> "A fantastic aspect of the situation is that although the general strike is in being and there is no centrally-organised industry, the workers are nevertheless taking upon themselves to keep essential services going for purposes which they themselves determine and support. Workers' councils in industrial districts have undertaken the distribution of essential goods and food to the population, in order to keep them alive. The coal miners are making daily allocations of just sufficient coal to keep the power stations going and supply the hospitals in Budapest and other large towns. Railwaymen organise trains to go to approved destinations for approved purposes. It is self-help in a setting of Anarchy."—*The Observer,* 25.11.56.

> "The Council of Miskolc . . . was formed on October 24, democratically elected by all workers in the Miskolc factories, irrespective of their political position. It immediately called a general strike, with the exception of three services: transport, electric power and hospitals. These measures show its care to administer the region and ensure for the people maintenance of

public services. Very quickly, too (the 24th or 25th), the Council sent a delegation to Budapest to establish contact with the insurgents of the capital, to assure them of the active support of the provinces and to act in agreement with them."—*L'Insurrection Hongroise.*

Lest we should fall into the error of supposing that all this was done by Workers' Councils, let us remember that the motive force of this social revolution was always the main body of workers —always, and not just at the beginning. The workers did not abdicate their revolutionary role when they elected councils. The council men were but delegates. Even where a workers' council was arrested or murdered by the AVH, the Communist Gestapo, the workers continued their revolt. And in cases where some councils had seemed to wilt before the dreadful military might of Russia, the workers insisted on a policy of no-compromise, revealing the grass-roots basis of the Revolution.

We must not, of course, suppose that all the revolutionary workers of Hungary were in the factories, or even in towns. Even now, the majority are land workers, peasants. The farms, too, joined the revolt, forming Freedom Fighter groups, denying large areas of the country to the Red Army and the puppet government and leaving the enforced farm collectives of the Communists, to decide themselves whether to farm the land individually or in voluntary collectives.

More, the farm workers, acting through their Peasants' Councils, organised collections of food for the workers and Freedom Fighters of the cities. Industrial and farm workers, city and country, were united in a mutually-supporting struggle against the Russian invader and his quislings.

For months, the main effort of the Kadar government was directed against the Workers' Councils, with little success. At first military suppression was tried. That failing, the Communist regime tried to hamstring the Councils by giving them official recognition and limiting their activity to giving advice on economic matters, while outlawing the central workers' councils for greater Budapest and other regions for interfering in so-called political affairs and decreeing the death penalty for "economic sabotage", including strikes. In this manner the Bolsheviks had killed the original true Soviets of the Russian Revolution. But the workers were too shrewd to be fooled by this old trick and insisted on the principle of workers' councils controlling the factories and the abolition of the Communist bureaucracy in economic affairs. *The Times* (2.1.57) listed this demand with others of the Councils, particularly "the right to strike as a legal weapon and as a safeguard against leaders who wish to defy the will of the people." Other principles quoted by *The Times* were: the right of peasants to choose their

own way of life and free choice of joining or leaving collective farms; the end of compulsory deliveries of foodstuffs to the Communist government—a form of double taxation; and "the overthrow of the one-party monopoly held by the Communist Party." Exactly one month earlier, *The Observer* reported:

> "The Government's plan to divert the workers' councils into innocuous channels by 'legalising' them as organs of economic self-government, somewhat on the Yugoslav model, but denying them the right to put forward political demands or issue a newspaper, has merely led to continued deadlock in Budapest. . . .
>
> "Meanwhile life in Budapest is gradually becoming more normal. Most of the shops have reopened, queues have diminished, and even some cinemas have reopened.
>
> "Ambulance services are working well, and at least in the hospitals broken windows have been repaired. Telephone and telegraph communications with abroad have been resumed—all by favour of the workers' councils, to which nobody can give orders."—*The Observer,* 2.12.16.

When the Kadar government failed to trick the Workers' Councils, it intensified the military struggle against them. But always the workers replied with the methods the occasion called for—the general strike, the stay-in strike, the fight with weapons, sabotage and non-cooperation.

> "The latter (industrial workers) were, in fact, most intransigent in their fight against Muscovite rulers, and since then they have continued to fight, either with arms or with strikes and sabotage, although other sections of the population seemed ready to accept a *fait accompli.*"—*New Statesman,* 8.12.56.

Throughout 1957 the arrests, "trials", executions and repression continued. On January 29 the Kadar Government suspended the activity of the Workers' Council of Railwaymen; on March 20, a Ministry of Interior decree stated that persons "dangerous to the State or to public security" were liable to "forced residence" at places specified by the authorities; official figures for the number of rebels arrested in July alone was 1,200; on September 29, Deputy Premier Antal Apro announced that the remaining Workers' Councils were to be replaced by "works councils, under the leadership of the trade unions"; on November 3, Minister of the Interior Ferenc Münnich wrote in Nepszábadság that the Workers' Councils were "led by class-alien elements . . . It is necessary to replace this whole set-up by new organisations as soon as possible;" and on November 17 an official announcement followed that all remaining Workers' Councils were to be abolished forthwith.—Source: *Hungary 56* (Andy Anderson, Solidarity, 1964).

The spirit of revolt

THE Hungarian Revolution was the most marked development of the unrest behind the Iron Curtain, but it was far from being an isolated instance. Everywhere there was the spirit of revolt among workers, peasants and students—and everywhere the same growing demands for freedom from the oppressive slavery of the one-party State, in which "deviation" is the greatest crime.

Even in Russia, where the dictatorship is longest established, the will for freedom is far from being crushed. Since the war there have been continual reports of unrest in the Ukraine, where the Anarchist guerilla army of Nestor Makhno fought a war on two fronts in the years following the 1917 revolution—against the White armies of Denikin and Kolchak and against the Red Army of Trotsky and Voroshilov. The Red Army of the Bolsheviks was no less ruthless than the Whites in its aim of wiping out the libertarian forces, which had raised the banner of free communism.

The spirit of freedom is still alive and refugees from Russia during the 1950's told of guerilla fighters still waging war on the Bolshevik State, under the black flag of Makhno.

Fighting between students and the army took place at Kiev on December 27, 1956—and there were angry clashes in other parts of Russia just after Christmas of that year.

One of the most striking episodes was at Stalingrad, where students demonstrating for "freedom of the spirit" clashed with the police and army. Forty students and two professors were arrested. On the following day, four Stalingrad factories struck work, demanding the release of those arrested. Within hours, all but six had been set free.

Demonstrations also took place in Leningrad and Tiflis, while more than 200 foreign students were expelled from Moscow University. This latter incident followed earlier expulsions, at the beginning of December.

It is clear that in Russia, as elsewhere, the slight relaxing of the straps on the Bolshevik straitjacket, which followed the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, was eagerly seized upon by workers and students, whose thirst for freedom was only whetted by the small concessions made.

The background of this student revolt is to be found in a report, published by *The Observer* (7.2.54 and 14.2.54), from Brigitte Gerland, a Berlin journalist released in August, 1953, from imprisonment in concentration and forced labour camps of Vorkuta

region, Arctic Russia. Of interned Russian students she said:

> "The message this student movement wanted to bring to the Russian people they called 'The true word of Lenin'. Yet the word of the great Vladimir Ilyich had changed strangely in the interpretation: it had assumed Syndicalist, even Anarchist features, more in the likeness of those Kronstadt sailors who rose against Lenin in 1921 to demand 'Soviets without Communists'. In their view, the Socialist state of the future would not be run by either one or several parties, but purely by peasants' and workers' 'syndicates'."

This movement represented, not an isolated prison discussion group, but a deep-rooted and organised struggle for freedom. Before the students she met were rounded up by the secret police, Brigitte Gerland reports:

> "The initiated recruited hundreds of followers in the great universities, spreading their propaganda both by writing and posting leaflets and by means of their 'flying distribution groups'."

It was in Vorkuta, in 1953, that the prisoners rose against tyranny. Following the execution by camp guards of a Ukrainian prisoner, who had killed a Stalinist informer, the workers on forced labour in the coal mines began to take strike action on July 20, 1953. Within five days, all 50 pits in the region were idle—and 250,000 slave-labourers had struck work in a giant protest action. On August 1, 120 of the strike leaders were executed, but still the struggle went on.

It was this fantastic direct action by slave workers, with other similar heroic struggles, which forced the Russian government to abolish forced labour—at least on paper—following the Khruschev revelations of 1956.

Highly significant, too, is the fact that the early divisions sent by the Kremlin to crush the Hungarian Revolution had to be withdrawn, because of disaffection and mass desertions, to be replaced by Mongol detachments from faraway Asia.

As in Russia, so in the other satellite states. In Bulgaria, traditionally the East European stronghold of Anarchist and Syndicalist ideas, revolt was simmering. On November 5, 1956, as the Russian tanks were shelling Budapest and the Hungarian provinces, a wave of arrests—directed mainly at Anarchist and Syndicalist militants, took place throughout Bulgaria. Among those detained was Christo Kolev, of Sofia, a well-known anarcho-syndicalist, whose life had been spent largely in the prisons and concentration camps under Fascism and Bolshevism. Among the many other Syndicalists detained on that day were Manol Vassev and Deltcho Vassilev, of Hascovo, and Stefan Kotakov, of Plovdiv.

The following quotations from *The Times,* related to Bulgaria, tell their own story:

"SOFIA, 2.11.56. . . . Soldiers with machine-guns patrol the streets and at night identity papers are checked more thoroughly than hitherto."

"Reports tell of peasants refusing to deliver their quotas and of Government collectors having to leave the villages without accomplishing their task." 6.11.56.

"It would seem also that the Government, in view of the present ferment in Eastern Europe, sees no alternative to reverting to the methods of the Stalin era." 7.11.56.

"A purge of the Army, begun last summer to curb a growth of 'nationalist' feeling among the officer corps, appears now to have spread to the lower commands." 4.12.56.

In Rumania, too, there was enormous popular sympathy with the Hungarian Revolution. Terrified by the unrest there, the plenary session of the Central Committee of the Rumanian Communist Party announced concessions at the beginning of 1957, which included wage increases averaging 36 per cent, with more for lower-paid workers, and the abolition of forced delivery of agricultural products.

These concessions mark the alternating pattern of kid-glove and iron-fist methods used by the Bolsheviks at the time. Here is an earlier report of events in Rumania, which shows the other side of the medal:

"Disarmament of most of the Rumanian Army has been proceeding for the past fortnight . . . the Soviet decision that the Rumanian Army was unreliable and had to be disarmed to prevent a repetition of the Hungarian events was taken after an overnight visit to Bucharest by Mr. Khruschev himself. . . . The Rumanian leaders' warning of the unwillingness of their Army to fight against Hungary, which prompted this decision . . . was based on reports of growing popular unrest in Transylvania and Banat, the provinces bordering Hungary, and of students' protest meetings all over the country, as far away as Bucharest and Jassy . . . meetings of railwaymen and miners, traditionally regarded as the backbone of Rumanian labour, had passed resolutions of solidarity with the Hungarian revolution . . . the Communist leaders, on their return from Belgrade, announced some wage concessions to workers and offered compensation and pensions to citizens who had been unjustly arrested."—*The Observer,* 25.11.56.

From Czechoslovakia and the Baltic States, too, came growing murmurs of protest and rebellion. From Lithuania, particularly, there were stories of unrest among the students. Reporting on Czechoslovakia, *The Times* (7.12.56) said:

"In spite of security precautions, demonstrations of sympathy for Hungary took place at Bratislava on October 27 . . . other

demonstrations have been reported from Levice, Nitra, Nove Zamky, Kosice, Lucenec, Secovce, Moldava and Velke Kapusany."

In East Germany, the Hungarian Revolution stirred the workers, already seething on their own account, and strikes, minor riots and demonstrations of workers and students were from time to time reported. Although the shadow of the Russian tank lies darkly over the German workers, they remember the days of June 1953, in East Berlin, when the spontaneous revolt of the whole people was sparked off by a demonstration of building workers on the Stalin Allee. Downing tools, they marched to the city centre to present their demands for higher wages and the cancellation of the increased work tasks introduced by the Communists.

They were joined by other workers . . . transport workers left their trams and lorrries to join the demonstration, factory workers rushed from their benches, students from the colleges, housewives from their homes and shopping, even schoolboys from their lessons to join the fight against the Russian tanks. Soon the revolt spread throughout Eastern Germany, and it was suppressed only by Russian military might.

But the next revolt of the East German workers may not be entirely spontaneous. Organisation may well give spontaneity the co-ordination and direction it lacked in the historic days of June, 1953.

The Polish revolt, like the East German, began with a strike of industrial workers. But, unlike the Berlin revolt, the Polish was premeditated and organised. The mass feeling of revolt was certainly there, waiting to be called into action, but the character of its bursting forth showed that factory-based organisations of the workers existed.

In Poznan, on June 28, 1956, the workers of the big ZISPO locomotive works appeared as usual at their benches and machines. Within 15 minutes they were marching out to Red Army Street in the centre of the city—15,000 of them. Almost at the same moment, other factories and work sites became idle as the whole industrial population joined in the demonstration, and the trains stopped running.

Street traffic had to stop because of the crowds, and the drivers of trams and lorries joined the strikers. Now students and housewives joined the march to the prison and police headquarters, which surrendered without a shot. The prisoners were free.

Next to the Communist Party headquarters, which were quickly ransacked. Then to the U.B., the Polish Communist Gestapo, where gun-fighting followed. Barricades went up. The radio station was seized and revolutionary broadcasts began. But the headquarters of the secret police torturers was not captured and, after heavy

fighting, the Communists—with the threat of the Red Army—regained control. But for how long? Be sure Poland will again revolt! Hope burns bright, for in the forefront of the battle were the young men and boys of Poznan, who had never known any life other than that under Fascist and Communist dictatorship, but hated both equally.

The East German rising began as a spontaneous revolt of one job site. The Poznan revolt was an organised strike of most factories in the city. One day, the revolt against Bolshevik oppression will be the organised rising of the workers of all the occupied countries—and the revolution may not stop at the frontiers of Russia.

Starved of solidarity

THAT the Hungarian revolutionary movement received no practical and active support from the governments of Western Europe and America is not surprising. These executive committees of capitalism were well aware that the Hungarian workers were not fighting for a return to private ownership of the land and means of production—much as they would like this to be the case.

The Workers' Councils, with their demand for workers' control of industry, are something capitalism dreads far more than seeing the monolithic Bolshevik empire preserved. Had the Workers' Councils established their control of the Hungarian economy, it would have meant the birth of libertarian communism in that country. And the example of the Hungarian working-class would surely have spread like wildfire across the frontiers, not only of Central and Eastern Europe, but ultimately westwards to our own side of the present Iron Curtain.

The growth and internationalising of the Workers' Council movement—so similar in its structure and aims to that of Syndicalism—would be the greatest possible danger to the ruling classes in both the rival power blocs.

So it is not surprising that this aspect of the Hungarian revolution—for us its most important and heartening aspect—has been given scant attention and no support from the Press and politicians of the "free world".

As one might have expected, the British Tory Government—itself adept at crushing movements of revolt when its own privileges are threatened (as in Kenya and Cyprus), or at waging aggressive interventionist war (as in Egypt)—limited itself to the admission of refugees.

Neither is it surprising that the United Nations stopped short at holding endless debates and passing resolutions condemning

Russian intervention—empty resolutions, because mere force of public opinion will never restrain this totalitarian dictatorship which, for nearly forty years, had been perfecting the techniques of deception and repression.

Nor should one be surprised that men like Nehru (himself ruthless when it was a question of suppressing opposition to his own highly-centralised government) were late and half-hearted in their condemnation of the Kremlin butchers and their despicable errand boy, Janos Kadar.

But what of the working-class of the West; those who should have been the natural allies of this epic struggle to rescue communism from those who have made its very name spell slavery and exploitation?

Unfortunately, the active support given to the Hungarian workers by their brothers of the "free world", as in the case of Spain twenty years before, was woefully small.

There was one crystal-clear way for the workers of the West to give effective expression to their solidarity with those who are sacrificing their lives in the struggle for freedom, and to their hatred for Bolshevik tyranny—co-ordinated boycott of all trade with Russia.

And this was quickly understood by rank-and-file workers. In Liverpool and Hull, for instance, stevedores and dockers refused to discharge and load Russian ships—a striking expression of practical solidarity and protest by the militant port workers.

But an appeal by the Hungarian Workers' Councils for a world-wide boycott action was rejected by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. These unions, controlled by timid social democrats and conscienceless careerists, are far more concerned with preserving capitalism's trade balances than they were with helping their tortured Hungarian brothers.

So, while the heroic Hungarian workers battled on, using the tried and trusted methods of direct action—armed insurrection, general strike, sabotage, boycott, mass demonstrations—little or nothing was done to support and succour their struggle. The tragedy of Spain, where lack of effective international working-class action strangled the revolution, was again enacted. And, as with Spain, where Fascism was enabled to take a big step towards eventual enslavement of the European continent, so the working-lass movement again betrayed its principles—and, in the long run, its own interests.

Physically, the Hungarian Revolution was crushed by overwhelming Russian military force. But the flame of freedom kindled by the Hungarian working class during October-November 1956 is still alive, showing the way forward to workers, not in the Communist dictatorships alone, but throughout the world.

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