

26 July 1957

RFE NEWS AND INFORMATION SERVICE - EVALUATION AND RESEARCH SECTION

Background Report
(Hungarian Research)

THE HUNGARIAN WRITERS AFTER THE REVOLUTION

This is the latest of a series of Background Reports on the position of writers in Hungary and brings the situation up to date to mid-July from Jan. 22 when the last one, entitled "Hungarian Writers' Resistance to the Government", was published. Others in the series were: "Important Personnel Changes in the Writers' Union" (18 Sept. 1956), "Congress of the Hungarian Writers' Union (18 Sept. 1956)", "Publication of the Memorandum of the Hungarian Writers' November Revolt" (10 October 1956) and "Hungarian Daily Background (Special on Writers' Union)" (31 December 1956).

The Dissolution of the Hungarian Writers' Association

After the temporary suspension of the Writers' Association for "activities contrary to the interests of the Hungarian People's Democracy" in mid-January, ("Nepszabadsag" 18 Jan. 1957), the drive against the writers still clinging to the revolutionary spirit and refusing all co-operation, was started with full force.

State Minister Gyorgy MAROSAN stated at the Jan. 27 meeting at PECS:

For weeks the government has patiently waited for a change of attitude of certain writers, that events would bring them to their senses and that they would realize their task to defend the People's Democracy and socialist achievements in danger. However, only a small faction of the writers became aware of the real situation, whereas the others continued their subversive activities aimed against the People's Democracy and the international socialist camp.

And because the previous lenience of the authority was construed as weakness, the government took the necessary measures by suspending the Writers' Association's autonomy as well as that of the Journalists' Association and by appointing a government commission. Those writers who took part in the agitation, in subversive activities and in the spiritual preparation of the revolution, were arrested. ("Nepakarat" 29 Jan. 1957).

"Subversive" Writers Attacked

At the same time, MAROSAN appealed to Communist writers and those with a progressive outlook to "liberate themselves from the spiritual terror of the others, to be loyal towards the people, to serve its

interests, to strengthen its power and then all the differences which so far exist would vanish." ("Nepakarat" 29 Jan. 1957) Articles appeared in "Nepszabadsag" day after day, criticizing the attitudes taken by the Hungarian Writers' Association during and after the revolution.

In his article "A Writers' Association, in which literary questions were relegated to the background long ago", Laszlo G. PESTI objects that the Writers' Association did not take a stand for the "revolutionary workers-peasant government." He continues by mentioning that, during the October days, the writers sent a delegation to the Parliament to put the writers' points of view. Tibor DERY, Tamas ACZEL and Sandor NAGY were the members of this delegation. The writer of the article blames the Writers' Association for not having repudiated Tamas ACZEL at a time when he was already broadcasting on the American radio. The writers also failed to protest when the Writers' Association was represented at the STRASBOURG revolutionary council by two of its escaped members. At the same time, however, they protested against the statements made by Gyorgy BOLONI in the "Lettres Francaises" and by Bela ILLES in "L'Humanite".

The writer of the article concludes that literary questions were pushed by the Writers' Association into the background. The literary characteristics of the Association had faded a long time ago, and that explained much. ("Nepszabadsag" 3 Feb. 1957).

The article by Endre MOLNAR, "On the Political Activities of the Writers' Association", says, among other things that: Although the Association remained formally on a socialist basis, actually it abandoned -- either voluntarily or involuntarily -- socialism, and Marxism-Leninism, until after October 23 it took up a position in the counter-revolution.

The mistake was not in that the writers criticized. One had to speak about the grave errors and sins committed by the RAKOSI regime. The trouble started when the writers poured forth a veritable ideological cross-fire on the Party concerning these errors, and when they were indifferent whether their biased repetition and frantic condemnation would eventually endanger the whole Party structure... We should quote some of these articles: the editorial "The Country's Worry" by Gyorgy PALOCZY-HORVATH, which appeared in the October 20 issue of "Irodalmi Ujsag" and simply contains bitter abusing words on the workers' fate in our country. The October 6 article by Sandor NOVOBACZKY "Strange Men", which was not content with criticizing Communist arrogance and separation from the masses but was actually aimed against the Communists themselves and the Party's political leadership. Gyula HAY's article "I do not like..." became ultimately the rallying cry against the officials and all the State and Party workers.

The policy of the Writers' Association was aimed at having a "holy, purifying revolution." And because this was the writers' purpose, some of them are still stubborn and continue to see the October-November events in the same light as before... ("Nepszabadsag" 10 Feb. 1957)

Marton LOVAS attacked the Writers' Association in the daily of the TANCSIS circle, the "Magyarorszag". In his opinion, the Association's greatest sin was in refusing to acknowledge that the revolution was actually a counter-revolution.

The majority of the assembled writers (at the last meeting held by the Writers' Association on 28 Dec. 1956) accepted, by simply lifting their hands, the pathetic statement that there was a revolution in Hungary during October-November. Certain leaders of the association made attempts to organize resistance against Party and government measures. ("Magyarorszag" 5 March 1957.)

The writer of the article also sharply attacked Gyula HAY and Tibor DERY. According to a resolution voted by the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party temporary committee on 26 Feb. 1957, the Writers' Association was one of the "hidden positions" taken up by the counter-revolution. After an investigation of the Association, the Ministry of the Interior decided to dissolve it. "Nepszabadsag" (21 April 1957) comments:

In the course of the investigation following the resolution on the temporary suspension of the Writers' Association, it was stated that an active group inside the association used it for subversive activities against the social order of the People's Democracy. Consequently, the Minister of the Interior dissolved the association.

In his Parliamentary address of May 9, Janos KADAR explained his action.

We also showed patience toward the writers. As far back as November 4, we knew already the serious part a group of writers had played in the ideological preparation of the counter-revolution. We hoped, however, that most of them would soon be cured of their ideological confusion and that they would become aware of how gravely they had sinned against the people and try to make up for the serious damages. Our hopes were not realized. The December 28 declaration brought by the Writers' Association was a great provocation to the government and an open admission that the writers stood for the anti-revolution. As stated, several of the writers have helped in organizing a resistance against the government. Therefore it is understandable that the government could not continue to tolerate the anti-people activities of the Writers' Association ("Nepszabadsag" 10 May 1957)

Terror Measures Brought Against Resisting Writers

Simultaneously with the attacks on the Writers' Association, a regular drive was started against certain individual writers. According to foreign sources, so far 20 of them were arrested. Hungarian official information on the arrests is as follows:

On grounds of grave suspicion of having participated in counter-revolutionary activities, respective organs of the Ministry of the Interior have arrested the following writers: Tibor TARDOS, Domonkos VARGA, Gyula HAY, Balazs LENGYEL and Zoltan ZELK and the journalists Sandor NOVOBACZKY and Pal LOCSEY. ("Nepszabadsag" 26 Jan 1957) Tibor DERY, gravely suspected of subversive activities, was arrested by the police. ("Nepszabadsag" 21 April 1957)

It is rumored that Gyula ILLES also has been arrested.

Sentences on the Writers

Poet Istvan EORSI was found guilty by the BUDAPEST court of having played an active part in organizations aimed at the overthrow of the People's Democratic order. He was sentenced to five years in prison, his property up to a value of 5,000 forint was confiscated and he was deprived of his political rights for five years. The sentence is subject to confirmation. ("Nepakarat", 24 May 1957)

A special committee of the Gyor-Sopron county court passed the following sentences against the Gyor writers: Mihaly LENDVAI was sentenced to eight, Gyorgy PETERDI to six, Imre TURI to five, Emil SZABO to four years and Grigyes GRABICS to eight months imprisonment. ("Nepakarat" 9 June 1957) The trials of writer Jozsef GALI and journalist Gyula OBERSOVSZKY are known to the world. GALI's one year prison term was changed by the Supreme Court to a death sentence and afterwards, on a protest lodged by the Chief Prosecutor, again changed to a 15 years prison term. Gyula OBERSOVSZKY was sentenced for life ("Nepszabadsag" 5 July 1957.) Writer and theatrical producer Gabor FOLDES, charged with having been a leader of a movement directed at the overthrow of State order and for several subversive activities, was sentenced to death by the special council of the Gyor-Sopron county court. The sentence is subject to confirmation. (Radio Kossuth 10 June 1957)

Efforts for the Organized Union of Collaborating Writers

After the Hungarian Writers' Association was dissolved, the Party tried to rally in an organized framework the writers other than "silent writers" who were willing to co-operate. The Literary Council and the literary section of the TANCSICS circle were set up.

Literary Council

The Literary Council was set up simultaneously with the dissolution of the Hungarian Writers' Association. According to the resolution on

the setting up of the council, its task would be to act as a consultative body for literary questions within the government i.e. the Ministry of Public Education.

The members of the Literary Council are: Gyorgy BOLONI, Jozsef FODOR, Janos FOLDEAK, Gabor GODA, Albert GYERGYAI, Bela ILLES, Aurel KARPATI, Bela KOPECZI, Kalman SANDOR, Jozsef SZAUDER and Gabor TOLNAI. ("Nepszabadsag" 21 April 1957)

Literary Councils Doubtful Future

There are signs that the Literary Council is in a totally isolated position and thus cannot cope with its duties. The editorial of "Elet Es Irodalom" entitled "The Legend of the Silent Writers and the Literary Council" (June 7) says:

We consider two matters to be of prior importance for the speedy and practical clearing of the situation: to enlarge the Literary Council with writers who are sincere supporters of the People's Democratic system, and to let the Council itself have a force in formulating government measures so as to enable the Council to assume responsibility in a genuine Communist manner in the present atmosphere which, to be frank, is still far from being easy in the social sphere.

The Literary Council has just started its activities. It held a few meetings in order to pass opinion on one or two questions, but so far it has had no opportunity to handle our cultural life effectively. We are well aware that its work would be considerably better if, besides the Communist writers representing a firm policy of principles, such fellow-travellers, whose talents we appreciate and who have already given evidence of their attitude toward socialism becoming more positive, would take part in it.

The Literary Section of the TANCSICS Circle

A literary section was set up within the exclusive Communist debating-forum the TANCSICS circle, set up in December 1956 as a successor to the PETOFI circle. This section has 55 members, Bela ILLES, Gyorgy BOLONI, Sandor RIDEK and Mihaly FOLDES among them. With regard to the work performed by the literary section, Gyula HEVESI, president of the TANCSICS circle, pointed out, in his presidential speech, that the circle has devised its literary-political attitude and has drafted a plan. The purpose of the section is: to liquidate cultural-political mistakes of the past, to solve literary problems and to carry into effect suitable measures. The writers who are members of the TANCSICS circle are Communists and adhere to the State guidance but strongly emphasize the need to condemn past erroneous practice.

The chief editor of the TANCSICS circle weekly is Gyula HEVESI. Its editors are Gyorgy BOLONI, Istvan HUNYA, Mrs. Janos MATEJKA, Sandor

RIDEG and Jozsef WALDAPFEL.

"Elet Es Irodalom," Paper of the Collaborating Writers

"Irodalmi Ujsag" appeared in Hungary on 2 Nov. 1956 for the last time. Since 15 March 1957, a new literary paper "Elet Es Irodalom," has appeared every two weeks with a circulation of 50,000 copies. Chief editor is Gyorgy BOLONI, Kossuth prize winner. He has made the following statement, reported in "Nepszabadsag"(7 March 1957.):

Our chief aim is to rally, after a long silence, the best of Hungarian writers, all those who are friends of the People's Democracy. We do hope that our work will contribute to an improvement in the contacts between our readers and our literature. I don't think it has to be specially explained that a country cannot exist without literature and a literary press, which is an essential bond between the authors and the reading public.

The paper "Nagyvilag" on world literature has also reappeared.

Efforts to Win over the Writers

Communists apply a double tactic toward the writers. On the one hand they are using severity, on the other they are try to win them over by approaching them with awards. They are even willing to make concessions in this respect.

An editorial of "Elet Es Irodalom" says that without the writers a cultural policy cannot be implemented.

As we see it, one of the chief obstacles to the realization of our good and positively-outlined cultural policy is that we still have failed to win over our writers and artists. With our present, admittedly, very narrow approach, about which many of us are anxious, we are in need of cultural workers and artists. There is a great need for them.

Do we demand that all the writers and artists who make common cause with us should be Communists, and should accept all the Marxist-Leninist doctrines, the constructive methods of socialist realism? No we do not demand that. Our only demand is that the attitude of progressive artists and writers toward the building of socialism in the People's Democracy should be positive. We think that with regard to our fellowtravellers, this demand is the most important condition for a correct literary policy. ("Elet Es Irodalom" 7 June 1957)

The articles "Losing the Way and its Moral" by Lajos MESTERHAZY ("Nepszabadsag" May 26) and "principles and Roads to be Cleared-thoughts on the appearance of VIHARSAROK ("Stormy Corner", "Nepszabadsag" 7 July 1957*) by Janos SZENTKIRALYI, are sure signs of an approach toward the silent writers".

At the 1957 distribution of the Kossuth and Jozsef Attila prizes, the decision of the jury was certainly influenced by a wish to accommodate writers.

The 1957 Kossuth-prize winners are: Jeno HELTAI, Laszlo NEMETH, Jozsef FODOR, Lorincz SZABO. (Laszlo NEMETH presented his 50,000 forint, which is attached to the Kossuth prize, first class, to the HODMEZOVASARHELY gymnasium, where, after 1945, he was a teacher for years. ("Esti Hirlap" 3 April 1957)

The 1957 Jozsef Attila-prize winners are: Jozsef LENGYEL, Gabor GODA, Sandor TATAY, Sandor SZONYI, Zsuzsa THURY, Magda SZECSEI, Gyozo CSORBA, Klara SZOLOS and Istvan SZABO.

Collaborators and Non-Collaborators

The writers' silence is a great worry to the Communists. Therefore, they make every effort to minimize the silence.

...the empty talk on the silence of Hungarian writers is a legend. Our theater programs and the list of books already published and to be published prove this.
("Elet Es Irodalom" 7 June 1957 and Hung. Press Survey No. 145.

The press is full of references to the active work of the writers.

The following names figure in the 1957 publishing program: Sandor GERGELY, Gabor GODA, Sandor H. HAMVAS, Bela ILLES, Emil MADARASZ, Boris PALOTAI, Sandor RIDEG, Bela REMENYI, Kalman SANDOR. A large collection of poems by Lorinc SZABO is under publication. Anna BALAZS is writing a two-volume novel; Tibor CSERES and Klara FEHER are working on a novel for the youth, Zoltan FABIAN is writing his diary, Aurel KARPATI some essays, Lajos MESTERHAZY a novel for the youth, Laszlo NEMES a novel, Imre SARKADI a sports novel, Sandor SZONYI a collection of short stories, and Zsigmond REMENYIK a short novel. Sandor BALAZS is working on a play, Marcell BENEDEK on a Literary Encyclopaedia, to be published in 1958, Judit BECZASSY on two novels, Ferenc JANKOVICH on a historical novel, Lajos KASSAK on his autobiography, Emil MADARASZ on a cycle of poems about the counter-revolution, Sandor NAGY on a novel about a cadre and Sandor TATAY on a short novel. The works of Jeno HELTAI are under publication.

* Hung. Press Survey No.161

The following representatives of Hungarian literature keep silent: Tamas BARANY, Laszlo BENJAMIN, Gabor DEVECSERI, Sandor ERDEI, Gyorgy HAMOS, Karoly JOBBAGY, Ferenc JUHASZ, Peter KUCZKA, Emil KOLOZSVARY-GRANDPIERRE, Lajos KONYA, Laszlo NAGY, Istvan ORKENY, Imre SARKADI, Istvan SIMON, Pal SZABO, Lehel SZEBERENYI, Aron TAMASI, Lajos TAMASI, Peter VERES and the imprisoned writers. They remain silent in the strictest sense of the word; some of them by refusing any political collaboration over and above pure literary activity. In his open letter entitled "Dear Mr. Writer" Jozsef FODOR protested against this attitude. ("Nepakarat" 16 June 1957.)

Escaped Writers Form an Association: "Irodalmi Ujsag" Reappears in the West

Escaped Hungarian writers continue to fight in the West for the nation's freedom in the spirit of the October revolution. On 15 March 1957 they held a conference in LONDON and decided to set up the Hungarian Writers' Association Abroad:

In view of the fact that the Writers' Association in BUDAPEST has been suspended, its headquarters appropriated and a number of Hungarian writers imprisoned, it became the task of the Hungarian Writers' Association Abroad to continue the work of the silenced writers' association in the spirit of the moral, intellectual and political traditions of the autumn revolution. The Hungarian Writers' Association Abroad, like the Hungarian people during the October days, stands for national independence, unity and neutrality and fights for individual and national freedom. The Hungarian Writers' Association Abroad has decided to publish "Irodalmi Ujsag", the mouthpiece of the revolution and of national unity, which has been banned in Hungary. ("Irodalmi Ujsag" 15 May 1957.)

The board of management of the Hungarian Writers' Association Abroad consists of: Laszlo SZABO, Gyorgy FALUDY, Bela HORVATH, Pal IGNOTUS, Imre KOVACS, Gyorgy PALOCZI-HORVATH and Zoltan SZABO. Chairman is Pal IGNOTUS; Secretary: Gyorgy PALOCZI-HORVATH. Editor-in-chief of "Irodalmi Ujsag" is Gyorgy FALUDY.

KADAR Outlines the Party's Policy in connection with Writers

In the concluding speech of the national conference of the HSWP, KADAR said:

We can identify ourselves with the standpoint taken by the Chinese Communist Party: "unity-debate-unity on new foundations". We are now in the debating phase when we confine ourselves to purifying the platform and to finding out who is left and who is right. The debate has to be carried out with ideological, theoretical and

political methods. The aim is to bring about a new national unity on a socialist basis. It will take many years to fulfill this aim. Naturally we have to set about our task tomorrow and we might achieve some results already this year. We need the unyielding help of the absolute majority of the people and of the predominant majority of the writers. We have to adopt clever methods and tactics which means that criminals should be punished, those who are misled helped, leftist or rightist hesitants convinced and those firmly on our side strengthened. ("Nepszabadsag" 30 June 1957.)

End