

CONFIDENTIAL

24 May 1957

FOURTH DRAFT

CHAPTER XI

REVOLUTIONARY AND WORKERS' COUNCILS

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INTRODUCTION

1. No aspect of the Hungarian uprising expressed its democratic aims more clearly than the creation of Revolutionary Councils in villages, towns and on the county level, and of Workers' Councils in factories. Within a few days, these bodies came into existence all over Hungary and assumed important responsibilities. Their chief purpose was to ensure for the Hungarian people real, and not merely nominal, control of local government and of mines, factories and other industrial enterprises. There was even a suggestion that a National Revolutionary Committee might replace the National Assembly, while another proposal was that a National Joint Council could exercise the prerogatives of Head of the State. While nothing of the kind took place, the fact that such proposals could be put forward at all suggests the degree to which they were felt to reflect the desires of the people.

2. The first part of this chapter will deal with the Revolutionary Councils and the second part with the Workers' Councils in factories.

3. Before the end of October, the entire Communist Party apparatus had collapsed in Hungary, leaving a vacuum in public administration. By Article 30 of the Constitution of the Hungarian People's Republic of 18 August 1949, various Councils had been established as local organs of the State administration; including County Councils, District Councils, Town Councils, Borough Councils and Town Precinct Councils. Owing to the one party system, these Councils came under the direct

control of the Party and local autonomy was destroyed. As soon as the Communist Party apparatus collapsed, the Hungarian people demanded that democratic elections be held in autonomous communities and that the Communist Party functionaries, police administrators and their associates be replaced by men trusted by the people. In accordance with these demands, Revolutionary Councils were created and took over the functions of the local administration in urban as well as rural areas.

4. In addition, and mostly after 27 October, Revolutionary Councils or Committees were created within Government offices, many of which took over the actual running of the Department; in the Army; by students and other youth groups; as well as by groups of intellectuals.

5 Just as these Revolutionary Councils appeared to be an expression of popular dissatisfaction with the local councils of the régime, so the Workers' Councils were an attempt to establish control by the workers themselves in factories, mines and similar enterprises. Under Article 6 of the Constitution of 1949, the State and public bodies were to act as "trustees for the whole people" for mines, large industrial enterprises and State-sponsored agricultural undertaking. In practice, this meant rigid Party control and, during the Rákosi régime, as was seen in Chapter IX, the Hungarian economy was largely subjected to the interests of the Soviet Union. The Workers' Councils in factories

seem to have been an expression of popular disapproval of this state of affairs, as well as the reaction of the workers to the Government-controlled trade unions.

6. Revolutionary and Workers' Councils sprang up all over Hungary without any central direction or co-ordinating plan, but, as the days passed, efforts were made to achieve some degree of co-ordination. These efforts were still in a tentative stage when the second Soviet intervention occurred on 4 November.

7. The people of Hungary followed the example set by the Russian workers, soldiers and sailors who established Soviets in 1917 and 1921 in Petrograd and Kronstadt. These Soviets also demanded free elections, freedom of speech, of the press and of assembly, free trade unions, the abolition of compulsory delivery of produce by the peasants and the release of political prisoners. In 1921 the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union denounced the Soviets of Kronstadt as counter-revolutionary bodies organized from abroad. Identical accusations were made against some of the Hungarian Revolutionary Councils by the Soviet Government and the Government of János Kádár. During the uprising, however, the Hungarian Workers' (Communist) Party had, apparently, a different opinion of these Councils, as seen in an article in Szabad Nép (Free People), the official organ of the Hungarian Workers' (Communist) Party, on 28 October:

"News comes all the time from all parts of the country about the setting up of municipal and county Councils, Workers' Councils, National Councils or Revolutionary Socialist Committees - many different names. All are alike, however, in being spontaneous, popular organs which came into existence through the upsurge of a new democracy of this country. We do not know who the members of the Councils are; we do know, however, that they are representatives of the workers and that they are being elected in a democratic way. There is none among them who would abuse the confidence of the people, who would misuse his power or think only of his personal position. Among them are those Communists who are respected and loved by the people. The good judgment and intelligence of the working masses are seen in the first measures taken by these popular organs."

8. Official recognition was given to the Revolutionary Councils by Mr. Nagy "in the name of the National Government" on 30 October. He referred to them as "autonomous, democratic local authorities formed during the revolution," and asked for "full support" from them. The setting up of factory Workers' Councils in all plants was recommended by the Central Committee of the Hungarian Workers' (Communist) Party in a statement issued on 26 October, and on the same day the Presidium of the National Trade Union Council published a similar appeal to all workers.

I. Revolutionary Councils

A. Territorial Councils

1. Provinces

9. As from 24 October, Revolutionary Councils were set up in many parts of Hungary in villages, towns, at district level and in the counties. Whole areas were brought under their control after successful bloodless revolutions, or after shorter or longer fights with the AVH. They at once assumed administrative responsibilities and began to address demands to the Government, some of which had considerable influence on the course of events.

10. Various names were used by these Councils, such as Revolutionary Council, National Revolutionary Council, Revolutionary Committee, Workers' and Soldiers' Council, Revolutionary Workers' Council, National Revolutionary Committee, National Council, National Committee, Socialist Revolutionary Committee. Many of the Revolutionary Councils were called Municipal Workers' Council or Workers' Council which sometimes made it difficult to distinguish them from the Workers' Councils in factories. In part A of this chapter, the term "Revolutionary Council" will be used.

11. Among the first provincial Revolutionary Councils set up around 24 October were those of Debrecen, Győr, Miskolc, Mosonmagyaróvár and Szolnok. The Council of Jászberény was set up on 25 October; those of Tatabánya and Veszprém on the 26th; Eger, Nyíregyháza, Szeged, Szekesfehérvár, Szolnok and Zalaegerszeg on the 27th; Szombathely on the 28th and Kaposvár on 30 October.

12. The circumstances in which the Councils were elected varied from one place to another. In many places they came into being after peaceful demonstrations, combined with the liberation of political prisoners; elsewhere the population's demands, among which the election of a Revolutionary Council was prominent, were resisted by the AVH and resulted in a massacre of the population before it was possible to proceed with the setting up of a Council. The following are some examples:^{1/}

13. In Debrecen in the course of a peaceful manifestation on 23 October, the AVH killed 2 persons. After this, power was taken over by a "Revolutionary Socialist Committee" which, after two days' negotiation, disarmed the AVH. In Gyor the Council was set up after demonstrations which took place before the Headquarters of the Communist Party with the participation of a crowd of more than 10,000. Demonstrators were originally led by Communists, and were joined by factory workers; the crowd tore down the Soviet emblems from public buildings and cut out the Soviet insignia from the flags. When the prison was attacked and political prisoners liberated, the AVH intervened and killed four people. The demonstrations continued during the night, and the day after, a notice was published in the papers concerning the mode of election of the Revolutionary Councils which eventually took

^{1/} Regarding developments at Pécs and Dunapentele, see Chapter V, paras. _____.

over power and disarmed the AVH. In Jaszbereny, after the news of uprising in Budapest arrived, workers and intellectuals went on strike, removed the Soviet insignia from official places and hoisted national flags. The Revolutionary Council was established by 150 inhabitants of the town. By 29 October the Council had the support of the peasants of the region. In Miskolc revolutionary demonstrations took place on 24 and 25 October and a "Workers' and Soldiers' Council" was set up. Demonstrations went on on the 26th before Police Headquarters and when demands were made for the release of demonstrators arrested earlier, the AVH fired into the crowd. After this, the crowd, composed of miners and workers, attacked Police Headquarters, blowing open the door with explosives and killing many members of the AVH. By nightfall, the Council had taken over full control of the town. At Mosonmagyaróvár, on 26 October, students and workers joined by townspeople demonstrated before the AVH Headquarters asking that the Soviet Star be removed from the building. AVH officers opened fire with four machine-guns, others threw hand grenades at the defenceless people. 101 people were killed and 150 wounded, many of them women and small children. After these events, with the assistance of the local police, the population disarmed the AVH formations and set up a National Committee.

14.

In Sopron the local population, with the help of the workers of Győr and Mosonmagyaróvár, disarmed the AVH and formed the Provisional National Council. In Szeged on 26 October, a military administration took the place of the City Council. On 27 October a demonstration took place in the course of which many people were wounded by AVH, and during the day a "Workers' Council" for the city was set up. In Szolnok there was fighting on 26 October to break down the Hungarian Communist organization and also against the Soviet troops stationed there, followed by the setting up of a Revolutionary Council. In Veszprém representatives of Workers' Councils in factories met on the 26th of October at the University and elected a Revolutionary Council for the city and the county. In Zalaegerszeg on 26 October a crowd of several thousands demonstrated before the county building and requested the resignation of the president of the County Council. The president resigned, and in agreement with him a Workers' Council was set up. In the course of the demonstrations, however, shooting started and two persons died and many were wounded.

15. The procedure followed in establishing the Councils also varied from place to place. The methods used included election by secret ballot at a general meeting, or at a meeting of factory workers' delegates, and election by representatives of peasants, factory workers and professional organizations. Sometimes, members of the Council were appointed by acclamation, sometimes by open election from those present at the meeting. In some cases, de facto non-Communist leadership appears to have been established without previous election.

16. The Councils included representatives of all segments of the population. In Debrecen, the Council had one hundred members of whom 60 per cent were workers, 20 per cent University students and 20 per cent representatives of the armed forces. The Councils of Győr and Eger consisted of workers, peasants, soldiers and intellectuals, while half of the twenty-eight members of the Council of Jászberény were peasants. Revolutionary Councils were fully supported from the beginning by the armed forces (Debrecen, Eger, Győr, Szeged, Szolnok, Veszprem), and by the local police (Debrecen, Győr, Mosonmagyaróvár, Szolnok, Tatabánya, Veszprem).

17. Some of the Revolutionary Councils were set up with the consent of the local Committee of the Hungarian Workers' (Communist) Party. [e.g. Debrecen]; many of them had from the beginning to the end Communist members [Debrecen]; others dropped their Communist members after 1 November [e.g. Pécs]. Most of them rallied almost at once the editorial support of the local organ of the Hungarian Workers' (Communist) Party. Regarding the attitude taken by the Councils towards the Party the following comments of Hetfoi Hirlap (Monday News) of 29 October are significant: "The demands [of the Revolutionary Councils] are, on the whole, identical and essentially socialist and democratic in their character, and do not intend to destroy the people's power. This is proved by the fact that wherever Party organizations endorsed the aims of the democratic revolution, no actions were taken against them."

18. Some of the Revolutionary Councils had radio stations of their own which broadcast news and announcements during the whole period of the uprising. The main radio centre of the Provinces was in Győr,

where Radio Free Győr and Radio Free Petöfi functioned on medium and short waves. Another important centre was the radio of the Workers' Council of the County Borsod in Miskolc which broadcast on medium wave. Other free stations were Radio Damjanich (Szolnok), Radio Free Debrecen, Radio Free Dunapentele, Radio Free Eger, Radio Free Rakoczi (Kaposvár), Radio Free Szechenyi (Szeged), Radio Free Szombathely, Radio Vorosmarty (Szekesfehervar) and the Radio of the Workers' Council of the County of Szabolcs-Szatmar. Most of the latter stations broadcast on short wave.

19. Of considerable political significance were the demands put forward by the Councils to the Government on behalf of the people of their area. These demands varied greatly, in accordance with the geographic location of the Councils. Those from the Western parts of the country submitted more extreme demands than the Councils in the East. Demands differed further with the political trends which were represented within the Councils.

20. Some Councils gave qualified approval to the Government of Mr. Nagy, while ~~making~~ conditions for full recognition. The great majority of Revolutionary Councils were unanimous in calling for immediate cease-fire, the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary and the organization of free elections. Other demands amongst those put forward by the Revolutionary Councils of twelve Hungarian cities and counties^{1/} which were examined were for complete independence and freedom for Hungary, for a protest to the United Nations against the presence of Soviet troops in Hungary, for the United Nations to deal with the Hungarian situation, for equality with the USSR, withdrawal from the
and counties

^{1/} The twelve cities/were: Debrecen, Győr, Miskolc, Nógrád County, Somogy County, Sopron, Szeged, Szekesfehervar, Szolnok, Szombathely, Tatabánya, and Veszprem.

Warsaw Pact, recall of Mr. Peter Kos, the representative of Hungary to the United Nations, the proclamation of neutrality. Further demands included changes within the structure of the Government, the abolition of the AVH, the creation of new police, the establishment of the National Guard, liberation of political prisoners, in particular, of Cardinal Mindszenty, freedom of speech, press religion and association, the setting up of Workers' Council in factories and new agricultural policies in particular, and abolition of compulsory delivery of produce by the peasants. It was often emphasized that a ^{landed} return of the/estates to their former owners would not be tolerated. "The people have already decided as far as the question of land, factories and mineral wealth is concerned," one Council delegate told the Government on 3 November. "The people will never alter that decision."

21. The Revolutionary Councils controlled the administration of the cities in which they were set up, dealing with all the major problems of local government and taking special measures to restore ^{local units} and maintain order by the setting up/of a National Guard. Some collected medical supplies and food for the fighters and wounded in Budapest. Thus the Revolutionary Council of Jaszbereny, in co-operation with the local peasants, from 30 October on provided the fighters in Budapest free of charge with nearly 10,000 kilograms of food on a daily basis.

ii. The Transdanubian National Council

22. Of all the Revolutionary Councils, that which appears to have wielded the greatest political influence was the Transdanubian National Council.

This Council was set up at a conference in Győr on 30 October, attended by about 400 delegates, four from each county and two from each city in the Transdanubian region, as well as by delegates of the Revolutionary Councils of Borsod and Bacz-Kiskun Counties and the Csepel Workers' Council. The conference was opened by the President of the National Revolutionary Council of Győr-Sopron County, Attila Szigethy.

Demonstrations held in Győr during the previous days had demanded the formation of a "counter-Government" to that of Mr. Nagy and had called for military help from the Western powers and for war with the Soviet Union. However, news reached the conference from Budapest about the "Inner-Cabinet" which Mr. Nagy had just set up^{1/} and which included Bela Kovacs, the Smallholder leader from Pecs in the Trans-Danubian area, and about the opening of negotiations for the withdrawal of Soviet troops. Under the impact of this news, the conference rejected the proposal for a "counter-government" and declared that it would immediately open negotiations with Mr. Nagy regarding the following points: (1) The Government must give reliable guarantees for the fulfilment of promises regarding the demands of the people, above all regarding the withdrawal of Soviet forces; (2) The Government must hold general elections by secret ballot with the participation of several parties after the departure of the Soviet troops, but not later than January 1957; (3) The Government must set up local organs for the maintenance of order with the approval of the competent Revolutionary Councils; (4) Until a new National Assembly is convened, all appointments of colonels and other senior officers must be approved by a "Central Council," which is still to be set up; (5) Changes within the Government are necessary and the freedom fighters must be represented adequately in the new Government; (6) The Government must issue a neutrality declaration to the UN; (7) The Government must guarantee

^{1/} See Chapter XII,
p. ____.

freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and freedom of religion. The conference said that the Transdanubian Council would withdraw recognition from the Government if the above demands were not satisfied and would start negotiations with Revolutionary Councils in Budapest to set up a new Government. The declaration added that the Council took note of the pledge given by Army Units in four cities of Western Hungary, including Győr, that they would defend the people against all foreign attacks, even if they received orders to the contrary. The Conference stated that it was essential to establish a unified military command for the whole territory of Hungary. The Transdanubian National Council stated at the outset of the Conference that negotiations with the Government would be undertaken in 24 hours and that, in the meantime, the strike would continue. During the night it was announced that the Ninth Honved Division in its entirety had associated itself with the Council. This was followed by an appeal broadcast by the Council to all troops in the Transdanubian area calling upon them to follow the example of the Ninth Division.

23. Under the chairmanship of Mr. Szigethy, a delegation from the Transdanubian National Council went to Budapest and met Mr. Nagy on 31 October at the Parliament Building. For several days Radio Free Győr had been insistently broadcasting the Council demands, including that for Hungarian neutrality. According to a broadcast, emanating from Free Petofi Radio, on 31 October at 10.30 p.m. Mr. Nagy took note of the creation of the Transdanubian National Council and requested its assistance. Representatives of the Council stated that the condition of their support to the Government was the acceptance of the demands of the Council.

24. The Prime Minister in his reply asked representatives of the Council to give him their confidence; he told them that he was taking steps to fulfil several of the Council's demands. On the following day at 7.50 p.m. Mr. Nagy made his broadcast proclaiming the neutrality of Hungary and announcing his appeal to the United Nations. Mr. Szigethy and his colleagues, on their return to Győr, reported to the second meeting of the Transdanubian National Council, which adjourned in the early hours of 1 November. The Council decided in favour of the continuation of ^{the} strike, pledging the resumption of work ^{been} after the withdrawal of Soviet troops "had / guaranteed diplomatically." According to testimony received by the Special Committee, at the above meeting of the Council, a delegate of Jozsef Dudas, the Chairman of the National Revolutionary Council of Budapest, proposed once again the establishment of a "counter-Government" within the framework of the Council. This proposal was rejected by the Council with an overwhelming majority.

iii. Budapest

26 Revolutionary Councils or National Committees were set up all over Budapest. As early as the night of 23 October, individual fighting groups elected from among their members the first temporary Councils to co-ordinate their forces and to present their demands to the Government. These Councils received added responsibility after 28 October when they took over public administration in their respective districts. The leaders of these Councils came together at an early stage with those of the Workers' Councils in the same area, and proceeded to set up unified Revolutionary Councils, consisting of representatives of the freedom fighters, Workers' Council and political parties. Several of the Revolutionary Councils of Greater Budapest were elected by democratic voting, but in many districts there had been no time to organize mass meetings for a democratic election when the Soviet forces intervened again on 4 November.

27 Information is available on the

Revolutionary Councils of South Budapest, Csepel and Districts II, V, VII, VIII, XII, XIV and XX. These Councils and Committees had an average membership of 20 to 25. Among the members were workers, soldiers, police, students and other intellectuals, small artisans and small shopkeepers. They met every two or three days and, like the provincial Councils, undertook various responsibilities of public administration, as well as emergency tasks rendered necessary by the fighting. ^{Several Budapest Councils,} /after adopting the sixteen demands of the students as a political platform, made other statements of their own concerning their recognition or conditional recognition of the Nagy Government. The Councils expressed their views in a

newspaper, Esti Hirlap (Evening News) which appeared until 3 November. The following is a summary of the major tasks outlined for themselves by these Councils: (a) restoration of order and peace; (b) organization of National Guard; (c) reorganization and democratization of public administration; (d) immediate tasks of daily public administration; (e) organization of supplies to hospitals mainly from the hotel industry; (f) treatment of, and supply to the sick; (g) just and equitable distribution of food and other gifts from the Provinces and from abroad, in co-operation with the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Hungarian Red Cross; (h) equitable distribution of available apartments; (i) repair of apartments and the communications system. By 3 November streetcars and buses had started, and on 5 November schools and normal work were to resume. (j) The clearance of rubble. In addition, they spent a great deal of time with political questions. After adopting the 16 demands of the students as their political platform, they made statements concerning the recognition or the conditional recognition of the Nagy Government. Some of the Councils suggested that the Government should be reorganized on a broader national, democratic and coalition basis. General support was expressed for an independent socialist and democratic Hungary and for the three people who, in their opinion, stood for these ideals: Imre Nagy, Janos Kadar and Bela Kovacs.

28. A National Committee and a Revolutionary Council, composed of representatives of the different parties, took over on 30 October the "ideological and political administration of the municipal authority" of Budapest, and pledged the restoration of full autonomy to the capital. The Committee, at its meeting of 2 November, elected

Jozsef Kovago Mayor and Peter Bechtler Vice-Mayor of the city--one of the Smallholder's Party, the other of the Social Democratic Party.

B. Functional and Representative Councils

1. Students and Youth

29. The Students' Revolutionary Council (Egyetemi Forradalmi Diakbizottsag) [of Greater Budapest] was created early in the uprising. It seems that its members had participated in the various University manifestations in Budapest.* Later, this Council was active in bringing together the various groups of student fighters scattered about Budapest, and, in many cases, isolated from each other. The Council also attempted to co-ordinate and direct them, but witnesses stated to the Special Committee that these attempts of the Council were not completely successful. The Council was in constant liaison with the Commander of the Units of the Hungarian Army which joined the insurgents, in had a radio station of its own, and after 29 October a publication Egyetemi Ifjusag (University Youth). Representatives of the Council had several meetings with Imre Nagy and Zoltan Tildy after 28 October, in the course of which the Prime Minister asked for their help in "the building of Hungary's future."

30. Later, the Council helped the Government in organizing the National Guard, a part of which was to consist of students. Various leaflets are indicative of the Council's attitude. One leaflet expressed confidence in Imre Nagy, a confidence which was said to have been shaken for 2 or 3 days but to have become "stronger than ever." In explanation of this change in

* See Chapter X.

attitude, the leaflet described how Mr. Nagy had been a prisoner of the AVH. In other leaflets the Council appealed to "Hungarians" urging them to resume work, but to be "ready for the fight" to safeguard the achievements of the revolution. In a further leaflet the Council stated that "only Hungarian soldiers should be on Hungarian soil" and that no United Nations troops should be sent to Hungary. The United Nations should, however, give economic assistance to the country.

31. The Free Hungarian Revolutionary Youth Alliance (Szabad Forradalmi Magyar Ifjosag Orszagos Tanacsa) was founded on 27 October to include ^{Students'} all revolutionary youth and student organizations. The/Revolutionary

Council and various other new youth groups in Budapest became members of this Alliance. Its publication was the former organ of the Central Committee of DISZ, the communist youth organization, Szabad Ifjusag (Free Youth)

32. The Alliance, and some of its branches, had issued leaflets ^{sixteen} restating the / demands of the students, and demanding the re-organ-
^{the} ization of/AVH, the recall of Mr. Kos from the United Nations, and calling for a strike until Soviet troops left Hungarian territory. One of the leaflets of the Alliance stated that "the revolution is in danger," and informed National Committees and Revolutionary Councils all over the country "that new Soviet troops entered Hungary from the East" and that "the shadow of tyranny is again over us." It called on the Revolutionary Military Council of the Hungarian People's Army that Hungarian Army Units stationed in the East should be concentrated at once for the defence of the capital.

33. On 28 October a preparatory committee was set up for the Revolutionary Council of Young Workers and Working Youth (Ifjúsunkasok és Fiatal Dolgozók Harcos Szervezete). This was supported by DISZ and was intended to cooperate with student and peasant youth groups, and was to help in the strengthening of the National Guard. It controlled a newspaper, Nagy Ifjúság (Hungarian Youth) from 7 November on.

ii. Armed Forces:

34. The Revolutionary National Defence Committee (Forradalmi Honvédelmi Bizottmány) was set up in the early hours of 31 October, at a meeting held at the Ministry of Defence, by two hundred and fifty representatives of (a) The Revolutionary Insurgent Forces (Felkelt Forradalmi Erők); (b) The Revolutionary Military Council of the Hungarian People's Army (Magyar Néphadsereg Forradalmi Tanácsa); (c) The Revolutionary Council of the National Police Command (Országos Rendőrkapitányság Forradalmi Tanácsa); and (d) The Revolutionary Committee of the Frontier Guards (Határőrség Forradalmi Bizottmánya). The first three groups had been set up on 30 October and represented freedom fighting youth, including the Hungarian Revolutionary Youth Alliance, soldiers, Non-Commissioned Officers, Officers, Cadets and Staff Officers of the Armed Forces; and the central authority of the Hungarian National Police. The Frontier Guards had been placed since 1949 under the authority of the AVH. They were, nevertheless, considered in a different light by the population of Hungary, and its officers and soldiers pledged loyalty on 29 October to the Government of Mr. Nagy, stating that they sincerely agreed with the revolutionary changes.

35. The meeting of 31 October was convened by the Revolutionary Military Council of the Hungarian People's Army, which, in the invitation, summoned

"the leaders of the Revolutionary Army Committee of the Units of the 3rd Motorised Army Group, which have replaced the withdrawing Soviet troops from Budapest", to report to it. Thus the terms of the invitation to the above meeting implied that the power of disposition of the armed forces at that date rested with the Revolutionary Military Council, in which leaders of all army branches were represented, and not with the Minister of Defence - at that time Mr. Karoly Janza. Local revolutionary army committees and military councils had been set up about 28 October all over the country, in different units, including the Air Force Commands and the military academies.

36. The meeting of 31 October set up the Revolutionary National Defence Committee of twenty-one officers headed by Colonel Bela Kiraly, formerly chief of the training centres of the Ministry of Defence; Colonel Pal Maleter, Commander of the Gyorgy Kilian Barracks; Major-General Gyula Varadi of the Tank Corps and Lt. Colonel Istvan Marian, leader of the Freedom Fighters of the Technological University. It also adopted a resolution of eight points which demanded the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the entire territory of Hungary, the repudiation of the Warsaw Pact after ^{the} convocation of a conference of the signatory Governments, and the occupation of the uranium mines by the Hungarian Army. The Revolutionary National Defence Committee approved the dissolution of the AVH, and at the same time demanded that former members of the AVH should not be allowed, in the future, to join any armed formation or the National Guard. The Committee stated that Hungarian armed formations would oppose, with arms, any external or internal enemy which set foot on Hungarian soil and attacked its independence, and that, if Soviet troops did not leave Hungary

by 31 December 1956, the Hungarian armed forces would fight with arms "for the cause of the country's freedom and for the defence of the achievements of the victorious revolution".

37. A few hours before the constitutive meeting of the Revolutionary National Defence Committee on 31 October, Mr. Nagy, acting on behalf of the Council of Ministers, "acknowledged and confirmed" the formation of the Preparatory Committee of the Revolutionary National Defence Committee which was, apparently, at that time, already in existence. Mr. Nagy added that "the Revolutionary National Defence Committee, once formally established, will form the new Armed Forces, made up of the units of the Army, the Police, the Revolutionary Insurgent Forces, and the Workers and Youth Brigades. With their assistance the Revolutionary National Defence Committee will restore the internal peace of our country and create the conditions for the implementation of the Government programmes proclaimed on 28 and 30 October. The Revolutionary National Defence Committee will operate until the new Government is formed, through general and secret elections and has taken office".

38. Thus from 31 October, the Revolutionary National Defence Committee became the supreme directing power of the Hungarian Army, of other semi-military formations and of the Freedom Fighters. Between 1 and 3 November the Defence Committee took several decisions of considerable importance and issued statements of policy with or without the Government's formal blessing. During the day of 31 October, the Committee proceeded to establish the Revolutionary Committee of the Public Security Forces (Forradalmi Karhatalmi Bizottsag), composed of the Army, the Police and the factory Guards, which was charged with the co-ordination of activities

of all Security Forces; and also to develop further the National Guard (Nemzetorseg), which was to be composed of members of armed formations of those fighters who were not members of the Army, Police or Factory Guards. Colonel Bela Kiraly was promoted to General and was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the National Guard, which was to enjoy equal status with the Regular Army and Police. General Kiraly made a statement in which he said that the National Guard should do their utmost to separate themselves from "sporadic disturbers" and that, for this purpose, they would be issued immediately with a special National Guard identity card; they would also receive, as from that day, flags for their units similar to those used in 1848, to which they would swear allegiance.

(iii) The Revolutionary Committee of Hungarian Intellectuals (Magyar Ertelmisegi Forradalmi Bizottsag)

39. This Committee was set up on 28 October at a meeting held at Lorand Eotvos University in Budapest. It was originally composed of revolutionary organizations of students, writers, journalists, artists and musicians, as well as representatives of the Professors of Universities, of People's Colleges, the Petofi Club and of MEFESZ, but it was joined later on by the National Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, as well as by associations of Historians and Medical Workers.^{1/} Transforming itself after 4 November into the Revolutionary Council of Hungarian Intellectuals (Magyar Ertelmiségi Forradalmi Tanács), it was still to play a part in events after that date. Several other Revolutionary Committees were set up by or for specific professional groups.

^{1/} The text of an appeal issued by this Committee on 28 October is given in Chapter IX.

C. Establishment of Revolutionary Committees within Government Departments

40. From 30 October, Revolutionary Committees were established in most of the Government Departments -- the Ministries of Construction, Education, Food, Foreign Affairs, Internal Trade, Justice, Metallurgy and Machine Industry and State Economy. Similar Committees were established in the National Bank, the Supreme Court, the Chief Public Prosecutor's Office, the General Directorate of the Railways and the Hungarian Radio.

Revolutionary Committees were also set up in the Hungarian Embassy in Belgrade and in the Legation in Vienna. In some cases, the Minister was included on the Committee, as was Rezső Nyers, Minister of Food; while in others the Revolutionary Committees removed the Minister from his post, sometimes with high officials serving under him.^{1/} In the following

Ministries and offices the Revolutionary Committees took over the functions of the deposed Minister - the Ministries of Construction, Internal Trade, Justice, Metallurgy and Machine Industry; the National Bank, the Chief Prosecutor's Office and the Radio.^{2/} Thus, in many

departments of Mr. Nagy's second Government, constituted on 27 October, the Revolutionary Committees were in complete control after 30 October. In some cases there is evidence that the Prime Minister endorsed the changes.

^{1/} See Chapter XII, p. ____.

^{2/} See Chapter XII, p. ____.

41. Revolutionary Councils in several Ministries issued statements and demands on important aspects of Government policy. The most important of these were the two statements issued by the Revolutionary Committee of the Foreign Ministry, under the chairmanship of Peter Mod, the present Permanent Representative of Hungary to the United Nations, on 30 October and 1 November. The first declaration, after stating that the committee identified itself with the "Hungarian liberation", condemned "the ^{fere} unwarranted inter^{fere}nce of Soviet troops and the blood-bath of the State Security authorities"; and demanded that "those responsible for all this, the Rakosi-Gero-Hegedues clique, should be brought to account and that the Soviet troops should be withdrawn immediately from the country's territory." The statement furthermore condemned the declaration of Peter Kos, the Hungarian representative at the United Nations at that time, at the meeting of the Security Council on 28 October, and demanded his immediate recall. The statement also declared that heads and members of the Foreign Ministries abroad "who were alien to the people and who represented and still represent the policy of the Rakosi-Gero clique," should be recalled and replaced.

42. In the statement of 1 November, the Revolutionary Committee of the Foreign Ministry informed the "entire Hungarian people" of, and ^{which} requested its support for, the proposal/it made on the morning of 30 October in which it "elaborated the measures necessary for realizing the neutrality of Hungary for all time by the Great Powers and neighbouring states...". At the same time, the Committee expressed the opinion that the Government should turn to the Great Powers and request material aid; and that the bauxite and uranium of Hungary should be utilized for

"creating national prosperity". The Committee finally stated that "it had taken measures" to ensure that the delegation already appointed to the General Assembly of the United Nations, including Imre Horwath and Ende Sik, should not leave for New York.

43. The Revolutionary Committee of the Ministry of Education on 1 November declared that the teaching of Russian in primary schools must cease and that religious teaching must be given in accordance with the wishes of parents. On 2 November, the Committee said that "wherever possible, regular lessons should start i.e. be resumed on 5 November".

44. The Revolutionary Committee of the Ministry of Justice on 2 November said that a draft decree providing for the release of political prisoners, except those convicted for illegal executions, was ready for consideration by the Council of Ministers.

45. The Revolutionary Councils in the Supreme Court and in other Courts on 31 October and 2 November called for the abolition of secret trials.

46. The Revolutionary Committee of the Chief Prosecutor's Office reported on 3 November that it had begun to review cases of political crimes, and a hundred young people were set free who had been charged with seeking to flee the country, "being no longer able to endure the poverty and terror".

47. The Revolutionary Committee of the Central Planning Board on 30 October demanded the denunciation of all economic, political and military treaties.

48. The Revolutionary Committee of Radio Kossuth (Radio Budapest) said on 30 October: "We are opening a new chapter in the history of the Hungarian radio at this hour. For long years past, the radio was an instrument of lies; it merely carried out orders; it lied during the night and in the daytime; it lied on all wavelengths. Not even in the hour of our country's

rebirth did it cease its campaign of lies. But the struggle which succeeded in securing the nation's freedom and independence in the streets spread to the radio as well. Those who were the mouthpieces of lies are, from this moment on, no longer on the staff of the Hungarian radio which, henceforth, will be entitled to use the names of Kossuth and Petöfi. We who are before the microphone now are new men. In future you will hear new voices on the old wavelengths. As the old saying has it, we shall tell 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth'." A similar statement was issued on the same day by the Hungarian Telegraph Agency (MTI), on behalf of its staff, "members of the Smallholders, Communist, Socialist and Peasant Parties".

D. Efforts for the Co-ordination of Revolutionary Councils and Committees

49. By the end of October, individual Councils felt the need to establish a central organization to co-ordinate the work of the numerous Revolutionary Councils and Committees. The second Soviet intervention prevented the establishment of such an organization, but certain attempts were made along those lines. Witnesses stated that thought was being given to the formation of a centralized national Revolutionary Council, on the lines of the Transdanubian National Council to which reference has been made above. A similar Council would have been established for the region between the Rivers Danube and Tisza. Such a central organization of Revolutionary Councils would have been built from the bottom, and not from the top. It would have co-operated with the Government to prepare for the holding of free elections. A specific proposal for such a central organization was made by a delegation from the Workers' Council of County Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, which called on

Mr. Nagy and Mr. Tildy on 2 November. This would have consisted of democratically elected members of the Workers' Councils in Budapest and the provinces.

50. Before the uprising, the mass organization known as the Peoples' Patriotic Front (PPF) had been led by the Hungarian Workers' (Communist) Party, but in which many non-Communists co-operated. On 28 October this organization set up a Central National Committee (Országos Nemzeti Bizottság), with the task of uniting and co-ordinating the activities of locally elected revolutionary bodies. It was said that this Committee would keep the people informed by press and radio on the activities of such bodies and on the scope of their authority.

51. On 2 November, the Central National Committee joined the Revolutionary Committee of the Public Security Forces and the Revolutionary Committee of the Supreme Prosecutor's Office in an appeal to the National Guard and citizens calling on them to "safeguard the purity of our revolution". The Committee appealed on 3 November to Committees and Councils in counties, districts, cities and villages and urged them to use their influence with the workers that they should resume work as soon as possible in all enterprises and factories. The Committee added in its appeal that the Government "fulfilled the demands of the insurgent".

52. The Hungarian National Revolutionary Committee (Magyar Nemzeti Forradalmi Bizottság) was set up around 28 October by József Dudas, a former member of the National Peasant Party. This was not identical with the projected National Revolutionary Council mentioned on the previous page. The Committee had a newspaper of its own from 30 October, the Magyar Függetlenség (Hungarian Independence). The first number of this newspaper

published a 25 point resolution adopted on 28 October which the Committee had at that time submitted to the Government. The Committee declared that it would not recognize the Government of Mr. Nagy until the latter included in his Cabinet the "elected representatives" of the Hungarian National Revolutionary Committee and others. It called for repudiation of the Warsaw Pact, for Hungarian neutrality and for the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops. Mr. Dudas also issued a statement on 30 October inviting the national revolutionary organs to send delegates on 1 November to a National Congress of Revolutionary Delegates. He asked that these delegates should be Hungarians with a clean conscience, who had never taken part in the policies of the old regime or of the regime Rakosi and Gero, but had always been "on the side of freedom and progress". The next day, Magyar Függetlenség announced that this Congress had had to be postponed indefinitely, because Budapest was surrounded by Soviet forces which prevented delegates from the provinces from entering the city. On 2 November, the newspaper stated that all the 25 points which had been submitted to the Government on 28 October had been implemented, some of them "against the will of the Government, and as a result of the defeat of the Soviet forces by the sacrifices of our sons and daughters who have fallen".

E. Contacts of Revolutionary Councils with the Government

53. From 26 October on, Mr. Nagy and other members of the Government, in particular Zoltan Tildy and Ferenc Erdei, received many delegations of Revolutionary Councils and National Committees from Budapest and the Provinces. Practically all of these presented demands to the Government, as has been described in the specific instance of the Transdanubian National Council. On 30 October, Mr. Nagy had talks with representatives of the

Hungarian National Revolutionary Committee, the Revolutionary Military Council of the Hungarian Army, the Revolutionary Insurgent Forces, the Revolutionary Committee of Hungarian Intellectuals and the Revolutionary Students' Council, and was presented with proposals based on a draft prepared by Jozsef Dudas in this case acting for all these groups. According to Magyar Fuggetlenseg of 31 October, these proposals were to be transmitted to the Government by Mr. Nagy. After 1 November at least three further meetings were reportedly held between representatives of the Government and the above mentioned revolutionary bodies to discuss the "political and economic situation of the national revolution". They were joined by the provisional executive of the National Council of Free Trade Unions, the Writers Union, and the representatives of the Workers' Councils of Budapest's large industries.^{1/} On various occasions, delegates met Mr. Zoltan Vas, Mr. Karoly Janza, Mr. Ferenc Erdei, as well as Mr. Janos Kádár. At the third meeting held on 2 November in the Headquarters of the Builders' Trade Union, representatives of the Revolutionary Councils emphasised that Hungary wanted to live in peace with all countries, but insisted on the withdrawal of Soviet troops because, as they stated, "the country would not lay down arms while there was one Russian on Hungarian territory". They added "that Hungarian neutrality was worth no more than the paper it was written on so long as armed Russian troops stayed on Hungarian soil".

CONCLUSION

54. The Committee concludes from its study of the Revolutionary Councils and National Committees that they were the result of a spontaneous, nationwide movement to assert the right of the Hungarian people to assume the

^{1/} See Chapter XI, II.F.

direction of their affairs and lives. This movement took shape, as did the uprising itself, at the local level and there was in the beginning little or no contact between the various groups. Nevertheless, as in the case of the students and intellectuals, a broad identity of aim underlies both the demands and the methods. It is clear that the formation of these Councils met a need widely felt by the Hungarian people.

II. Workers' Councils in Factories

Since 1947, trade unions in Hungary had become instruments of the (Communist) Government and eventually agents of the Hungarian Workers' Party. From then on, they were exclusively used to establish production standards, working conditions and wage scales in such a way as to serve the interests of the State. Their leaders were appointed by the Government, under the direction of the Party, and the chairman of the shop committee in each plant picked the committee members from workers trusted politically by the Party. Only one candidate was put up for election, and he was elected by show of hands. In these circumstances, as witnesses stated, workers ceased to consider the trade unions as their true representatives, but looked towards the establishment of genuine workers' organizations which would not remain indifferent to their complaints and their demands. This criticism of the unions had become widespread before the uprising, and Nepszava, the central organ of the National Council of Trade Unions,^{1/} declared on 9 September 1956 in an editorial: "Trade Union activities in Hungary became distorted and for years have been run on the wrong lines. The hour has come now when the trade union movement should become, once again, a workers' movement."

Hungarian workers were aware that in neighbouring Yugoslavia, the economic and social status of workers was superior to their own, and that Yugoslav workers had some say in the running of factories through the agency of Workers' Councils. Hungarian workers, according to witnesses, were especially attracted by the Yugoslav system whereby the factory manager

^{1/} Szakszervezetek Országos Tanácsa (SZOT).

was elected by the Workers' Council and not imposed on them as was the case in Hungary. For some time before the revolution, questions relating to worker-management relations in general, and the Yugoslav Workers' Councils in particular, had been widely discussed in the trade unions and in the Petöfi Club. Articles were published - including one by the Deputy Secretary-General of the National Council of Trade Unions, Jeno Fock - suggesting changes in the status of trade unions and factory bodies. A well-known economist, Janos Kornai, a convinced Communist, made a critical study of the "scientific Marxist-Leninist planned economy", and among the new methods which he proposed to help in solving the problems of State-managed industry, he stressed the role of the Workers' Councils. During the summer and fall of 1956, leading economists and trade union leaders - among them Professor István Friss, Zoltán Vas and Sandor Gáspár, the latter Secretary-General of the National Council of Trade Unions - went to Yugoslavia to study the functioning of the Workers' Councils, and reported on them at public lectures and in the Press.

Some of the demands put forward by student organizations and other intellectual bodies on the eve of the uprising related to the situation of workers and included proposals for the setting up of Workers' Councils. The Petöfi Club of the ^{Communist} League of the Working Youth (DISZ), in a resolution adopted on 22 October, suggested that the Central Committee of the Party and the Government should promote "the development of a socialist democracy in Hungary ... by satisfying the justified political demands of the working class, and by establishing factory autonomy and workers democracy".^{1/} A statement issued by the Hungarian Writers' Union on 23 October, included

1/ Szabad Ifjúság, 23 October 1956.

the following point: "Factories must be run by workers and specialists. The present humiliating system of wages, working norms and social security conditions must be reformed. The trade unions must truly represent the interests of the Hungarian working class."^{1/}

A. The Establishment and Function of Workers' Councils

The first Workers' Council in Hungary, which was set up in the United Lamp Factory in Budapest (Egyesült Izzó), was constituted on 24 October,^{2/} some two days before the authorization of the setting up of such Councils by the Central Committee of the Communist Party. The first Workers' Council in the provinces was set up in Debrecen around 25 October. By 26 October, Workers' Councils had been set up in many factories both in Budapest and in the provinces. Workers' Councils were elected in enterprises of the varied types - in industrial plants, mines, State-owned farms and hospitals.

Workers' Councils of factories in a given area set up co-ordinating committees among themselves. Such a committee called the Central Workers' Council of Csepel was set up about 30 October by the nineteen Workers' Councils in that area. The Workers' Councils in the Greater Budapest area set up their co-ordinating body after the second Soviet attack; this Central Workers' Council was to play a major political role during the month of November and part of December 1956.^{3/}

Witnesses explained how the Workers' Councils, in which they had participated, were elected by the factory workers in free, democratic elections. In some cases, for lack of time, no real elections were organized but, by forming a temporary Workers' Council, de facto leadership of the workers in

^{1/} Budapest Radio, 23 October 1956, 12 midnight.

^{2/} Népakarat, 1 November 1956. The radio announcement on the setting up of this Council was made at 3.45 p.m. on 26 October in the following terms: "The workers of the United Lamp Factory have recognized the grave situation of our country and have decided to set up a Workers' Council."

^{3/} See Chapter .

the factory was assured. Few Communists were among those elected to the Workers' Councils. In the opinion of witnesses connected with various Councils, the industrial workers no longer put their trust in Communist leaders. Many of the heads of formerly Communist-controlled trade unions voluntarily relinquished their positions in favour of the new leaders of the Workers' Councils.

The tasks of Workers' Councils varied during the different phases of the revolution. However, the Councils were, above all, active political organs of the workers. In practice, between 24 and 31 October, they were "strike committees" and insurrectionary centres for combatant workers. After 31 October, and until the second Soviet intervention, the Councils considered that their chief responsibility was to prepare for a resumption of work. From that time on, the Workers' Councils participated fully in the political aspects of the revolution. They were also active in the organization of food supplies for the people of Budapest, especially for hospitals, and took part in the repair of damaged hospitals and factories and in restoring means of transport and communications. The first step taken by the Councils was usually the dismissal of the existing managerial staff of the factory or establishment. In many cases Workers' Councils dismissed the directors and personnel officers who were members of the Communist Party, but retained the business and technical managers if they were not members of the Party. Another step taken by the Workers' Councils was to withdraw money from the bank account or to use other available funds of the undertaking concerned to pay the workers' salaries. Workers' Councils also sought to secure food for workers and their families. In some cases, factory guards were set up to protect the plant. Many Workers' Councils destroyed the "White cards" on all workers which were held by the personnel officer. In many cases, they removed photographs of Russian and Communist

leaders and Soviet insignia. In some cases plans were drawn up to organize the work of the undertaking so as to increase production and reduce costs.

Apart from the functions mentioned above, Workers' Councils were responsible for transmitting to Mr. Nagy's Government the political and economic demands of the workers. This function was of considerable significance at the beginning of the uprising, but lost some of its importance later, when major demands were put forward by the Revolutionary Councils. However, it regained importance in the first days of November with the increased concentration of Russian troops on Hungarian soil, and after 4 November it became of paramount importance.

The emergence of the Workers' Councils and of the Revolutionary Councils were closely related phenomena of the Revolution. In many cities the Revolutionary Councils were elected by the delegates of Workers' Councils, and most of the Revolutionary Councils included many workers in their membership. Witnesses described how, after the election of a Revolutionary Council or a National Committee in such a way, a mutual link was created between a Revolutionary Council and the Workers' Councils which were to be set up in the area covered by it. In one case, reported by the newspaper of the Hungarian National Revolutionary Committee, the establishment of certain Workers' Councils was not recognized, and a new election was ordered "in accordance with the spirit of true democracy".^{1/}

The demands put forward by the Workers' Councils in most cases resembled those of the Revolutionary Councils described in Part A of this Chapter. In many cases, they were coupled with the announcement of a strike, should the demands not be met. Thus on 26 October, the Workers' Council of Miskolc

^{1/} Magyar Függetlenség, 31 October 1956.

demanding that the Soviet Army should leave Hungary at once, that a new Hungarian Government should be constituted and that a complete amnesty be extended to all those who had participated in the uprising.^{1/} The Temporary Workers' Council of the Hungarian Optical Workers demanded on 29 October the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary and the recall of Peter Kos from the United Nations. They added that the factory would resume work only if the delegation which had been sent to the Government received a satisfactory answer.^{2/} The representatives of Workers' Councils from a number of factories of Greater Budapest, which met at the Belojanis Communication Factory on 31 October, demanded free and secret elections with the participation of several parties, the trial of those responsible for the AVH massacres, immediate dismissal of old Ministers and immediate withdrawal of Hungary from the Warsaw Pact.^{3/}

B. Authorization and encouragement of Workers' Councils by trade unions, the Party and the Government

The Workers' Councils were a spontaneous creation of the factory and other workers concerned to improve their conditions of work, the role of the Councils was recognized without delay by the Trade Unions, the Communist Party, and by the Government.

Prime Minister Nagy received on 25 October a delegation of a group of workers from Borsod County, who submitted to him twenty-one demands, and several of which related to the situation of workers.^{4/} On 26 October, at 12.58 p.m., Budapest Radio announced that the Prime Minister had accepted these demands and would embody them in the programme of the new Government.

1/ Miskolc Radio, 1.10 a.m., 26 October 1956
2/ Budapest Radio, 8.02 p.m., 29 October 1956
3/
4/ Nepszava, 26 October 1956.

On the morning of 26 October, the Praesidium of the National Council of Trade Unions announced a new political and economic programme.^{1/} The first point in the economic part of the programme read as follows: "Constitution of Workers' Councils in every factory with the participation of intellectuals there. Installation of a worker-directorate parallel with the radical transformation of the centralized planning system and of economic direction by the State; workers and factory-intellectuals to take over the direction of factories. Immediate formation of workers councils, which should contact their trade union centres without delay to decide on tasks." The announcement continued that the Hungarian trade unions had to become active again as before 1948, and they would have to change their name to "Hungarian Free Trade Unions". Later on, the Praesidium made the following appeal: "Workers! The desire of the working class has been realised. Undertakings will be managed by Workers' Councils. This will complete the process by which the factories are taken over as the property of the people. Workers and technicians! You can now regard the enterprises as being entirely your own. From now on, you will manage these yourselves. The excessive central management of the factories, which has prevailed hitherto, will now cease, together with the faults arising from it. A heavy responsibility is laid upon the Workers' Councils; therefore you must elect the members of such Councils with great circumspection and from the most experienced and best workers. The new Government will increase the pay of those earning low wages. The sooner you start production in the factories and the better our Councils work, the more speedily can wages be raised, and the higher will they become. Therefore, support the new Hungarian Government in its efforts for socialist construction and a free

^{1/} Id.

and democratic Hungary."

Later on in the evening of 26 October, the Central Committee of the Communist Party declared that it approved the election of Workers' Councils "with the co-operation of the trade union organs".^{1/} It added that wages and salaries had to be increased to satisfy "the lawful material demands of the working class". In explanation of this decision of the Central Committee, it was stated later that the Party had "perfect faith in our working class" in which it saw the leading force of socialism and on which it relied in all circumstances. Hope was expressed that, by the organization of the Workers' Councils, the working class would lend its support to the new Politburo of the Communist Party and to the new Government.

On 27 October, the Praesidium of the National Council of Trade Unions proposed that Workers' Councils should be set up "everywhere", in factories, enterprises and mines, and issued directives for their "election, functions and tasks":^{2/} "Members of the Workers' Councils should be elected by all workers of the factory, workshop or mine in question. A meeting called to carry out the election should decide the method of election. Recommendations for Workers' Council membership should be presented, as a general rule, by the shop committees or by a worker who commands respect. Depending on the size of the undertaking the Workers' Councils should generally consist of from 21 to 71 members, including proportionate representation of every group of workers. In factories employing less than 100 workers, all workers may be included in the Workers' Council. The Workers' Council shall take decisions on all questions connected with production, administration and management of the plant. Therefore: (1) for the direction of the production

1/ Szabad Nep, Extraordinary edition 27 October 1956.

2/ Nepszava, 30 October.

and management of the factory, it should elect from among its own members a Council of Direction with 5-15 members which, in accordance with the direct instructions of the Workers' Council, will take decisions on matters connected with the management of the factory, such as the engagement and dismissal of workers, economic and technical leaders; (2) it will draw up the factory's production plan and define tasks connected with technical development; (3) the Workers' Council will decide on the drawing up of the wage system best suited to the conditions peculiar to the factory and on the introduction of that system, as well as on the development of social and cultural amenities in the factory; (4) the Workers' Council will decide on investments and the utilisation of profits; (5) the Workers' Council will determine the order of business of the mine, factory, etc; (6) the Workers' Council will be responsible to all the workers and to the State for correct management. The principal and immediate task of the Workers' Council is to resume production and to establish and ensure order and discipline. The workers' through their representatives, should protect their livelihood, the factory."

Additional directives were issued by urban and rural Revolutionary Councils in different parts of the country. For example, the Praesidium of the Revolutionary Council of Borsod County stated that the task of the Workers' Councils was "to exercise control over the manager, the chief engineer, factory foremen and the workers of the plant", and requested them to attend urgently to the maintenance of order at their respective places of work.^{1/}

On 30 October, the National Council of Trade Unions became the National Council of Free Trade Unions, and replaced its old leadership by a

^{1/} Eszakmagyarország, 27 October 1956.

provisional organizing committee composed of "old trade union leaders who had been dismissed and imprisoned in the past, and new revolutionary trade union leaders". The Provisional Executive Committee, in an appeal made on 31 October, hailed the Workers' Councils and "requested workers to return to their jobs and to create, under the leadership of the Workers' Councils, the conditions necessary to resume production".^{1/}

The institution of the Workers' Councils received enthusiastic support in the Hungarian press, over the radio and from professional and other organizations. Thus the People's Patriotic Front (PPF) declared, on 28 October, that this is "our revolution, because it abolishes the inhuman production norms and entrusts the factories to Workers' Councils".^{2/} The Revolutionary Committee of Hungarian Intellectuals stressed in its programme, on 28 October, that "factories and mines should really become the property of the workers" and that they should "not be returned to the capitalists, but managed by freely elected Workers' Councils".^{3/}

The institution of the Workers' Council, after having received the blessing of trade unions and the Communist Party, found its way into the programme of Mr. Nagy's new Government. The Prime Minister stated on 28 October that the Government welcomed the "initiative of factory workers as regards the extension of factory democracy and approved the formation of Workers' Councils". He also said that the Government would take measures to settle, to the satisfaction of the working class, the "old and justified demands and to remedy old complaints".^{4/}

1/ Népszava, 1 November 1956.

2/ Budapest Radio, 10.48 p.m., 28 October 1956

3/ Egyetemi Ifjusag, 29 October 1956

4/ Népszava, 29 October 1956

On 1 November, the Workers' Councils of the large Budapest factories, delegates of various Revolutionary organizations and of the National Council of Free Trade Unions had two meetings with representatives of the Government, to discuss the "grave situation" created by the continuance of the nationwide strike. At these meetings, speaking on behalf of Mr. Nagy's Government, Mr. Ferenc Erdei appealed, through the representatives of the Workers' Councils and the trade unions, to the workers of Hungary, pleading with them to resume work.^{1/} The next day seventeen large factories of Greater Budapest, among them the Csepel iron and metal works, Mavag, Ganz electric and wagon factories and the Lang machine factory, as well as the transport workers and "all the workers" of Districts XIII, XIV and XV of Budapest, appealed to all workers of Hungary "take up work immediately". They stated that "in their opinion the Government has fulfilled the main demands of the Hungarian people": the repudiation of the Warsaw Pact, and the declaration of neutrality. Furthermore, "there are guarantees that in the near future secret elections will be held". The appeal stated that "continuous strikes would paralyse the economic life of the country" and that "resumed production will provide the strength our political life needs at this moment".^{2/}

Witnesses stated to the Committee that further negotiations between representatives of the Government and the ^{Workers'} major/Councils of Greater Budapest had taken place on 2 and 3 November, and subsequently an agreement had been reached for the resumption of work in all Hungarian industries and factories on Monday, 5 November. It was in the early morning of Sunday, 4 November, that the Soviet armour struck again.

^{1/} Magyar Nemzet, 2 November 1956; Kis Ujsag, 2 November 1956.
^{2/} Nepszava, 2 November 1956.

Conclusion

The Committee concludes from its study of the Revolutionary Councils that they were the result of a spontaneous, nation-wide movement to assert the right of the Hungarian people to assume the direction of their affairs and lives. This movement took shape, as did the uprising itself, at the local level and there was in the beginning little or no contact between the various groups. Nevertheless, as in the case of the students and intellectuals, a broad identity of aim underlies both the demands and the methods. It is clear that the formation of these Councils met a need widely felt by the Hungarian people.

The same is true of the Workers' Councils. All witnesses confirmed that dissatisfaction with the trade unions of the régime was one of the most important grievances of the Hungarian workers. In addition, they demanded a genuine voice in the control of the undertaking in which they worked, and this they set out to obtain by electing Councils along democratic lines. These Councils at once assumed important responsibilities in the factories, mines and other undertakings, and they exerted a considerable influence upon the Government, with which delegations from a number of them maintained direct contact. The overwhelming support given by Hungarians to these Workers' Councils confirms the impression that they were among the most important achievements of the Hungarian people during their few days of freedom.