

FF105 B-WIRE
EAST -- EAST BLOC DEMOCRACY -- OF A SORT

30-APR-85 10:46

Tamas
(b-2)

LONDON, APRIL 30 (SPECIAL) THE LONDON TIMES HAS AN ARTICLE BY RICHARD BASSETT IN BUDAPEST WHICH READS AS FOLLOWS:

No!
"DEGENERATE IDIOT", "SHOOT HIM", "TRAITOR", THE CROWD SHOUTS WHILE A BESPECTACLED AND BEARDED MAN, SMARTLY DRESSED, ATTEMPTS TO TALK OF HIS COUNTRY'S FUTURE. THE OCCASION: ONE OF HUNDREDS OF CONSTITUENCY MEETINGS IN HUNGARY TO DETERMINE WHO SHOULD STAND FOR LOCAL COUNCILS AND PARLIAMENT, A LIMITED ATTEMPT TO STIMULATE DEMOCRACY UNIQUE AMONG MEMBERS OF THE WARSAW PACT. THE MAN: GASPAR TAMAS, A PROMINENT DISSIDENT WHO HAS PROVOKED THE AUTHORITIES FIRST BY WRITING TO THE TIMES ABOUT THE PLIGHT OF MAGYARS IN ROMANIA, AND NOW BY STANDING FOR ELECTION AGAINST NO LESS A FIGURE THAN HUNGARY'S FOREIGN MINISTER, PETER VARKONYI.

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THIS WARD OF BUDAPEST IS WELL STOCKED WITH PARTY MEMBERS WORKING FOR THE CITY'S BUREAUCRACY, SO TAMAS'S PEPPERY RECEPTION IS NOT UNEXPECTED. AT AN EARLIER SELECTION MEETING, HIS RHETORIC HAD BEEN DROWNED BY A CHORUS OF INVITATIONS FOR THE DISSIDENTS TO "GET BACK TO TRANSYLVANIA". BUT AT THIS MEETING TAMAS HAD BROUGHT HIS BIG GUNS. ONE BY ONE PROMINENT WRITERS STOOD UP TO DELIVER TO A CLEARLY INTERESTED AUDIENCE AN ELOQUENT DEFENCE OF THEIR DEMANDS FOR REFORM.

FIRST MIKLOS HARASTI, ONCE DESCRIBED BY A JOURNALIST AS THE PERFECT INCARNATION OF A 19TH CENTURY MAGYAR POET, SPOKE ON THE IMMORALITY OF THE COUNTRY'S WIDE DIFFERENCES IN LIVING STANDARDS.

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THE AUDIENCE, THUS SOFTENED, WAS THEN ADDRESSED BY GABOR DEMSZKY, IMPRISONED AND BEATEN UP LAST YEAR FOR ACTIVITIES HOSTILE TO THE STATE. A SHY, RATHER GENTLE SPEAKER, DEMSZKY BROUGHT UP THE SENSITIVE TOPIC OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN HUNGARY, TO THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S VISIBLE DISTASTE.

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IF HUNGARY WAS A LIBERAL COUNTRY, HE SAID, WHY WERE ITS PRISONS FILLED WITH CATHOLICS (AT PRESENT MORE THAN 250) FOR REFUSING, ON GROUNDS OF CONSCIENCE, TO DO MILITARY SERVICE? WHY WERE THE DISSIDENTS' HOMES STILL BEING SEARCHED AND THEIR BOOKS CONFISCATED AND BURNT?

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IN THE END TAMAS LOST BY SOME 300 VOTES BUT THIS TENTATIVE ATTEMPT AT BALANCED POLITICAL DEBATE, IN A COUNTRY WHICH IS BY NO MEANS A DEMOCRACY, SHOULD NOT BE UNDERESTIMATED. MINISTERS IN WARSAW PACT COUNTRIES DO NOT USUALLY HAVE TO SUFFER THE INDIGNITY OF DEFENDING THEIR POLICIES IN PUBLIC -- LET ALONE IN FRONT OF PEOPLE SOME OF THEM CONSIDER CRIMINALS.

THIS CONTEST HAS BEEN ECHOED THROUGHOUT HUNGARY AS THE NEW ELECTORAL LAW OF 1983 CAME INTO FORCE FOR THE FIRST TIME FOR THIS YEAR'S ELECTIONS, WHICH TAKE PLACE EVERY FIVE YEARS.

THIS LAW DEMANDS THAT TWO OR MORE CANDIDATES CONTEST EVERY NATIONAL AND LOCAL SEAT. COMPETITION HAS BEEN PERMITTED SINCE 1971. UNTIL NOW, HOWEVER, OPPONENTS WERE RELUCTANT TO STAND AND LESS THAN 1 PER CENT OF PARLIAMENTARY SEATS WERE CONTESTED.

FEW HUNGARIANS SEEM TO HAVE CONSIDERED A SEAT WORTH HAVING. LOCAL COUNCILS HAVE ONLY RECENTLY BEEN ABLE TO EXERCISE MORE POWER, AND PARLIAMENT HAS MERELY ADDED ITS IMPRIMATUR TO DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE.

(PTO)

FF106

B-WIRE

30-APR-85 10:49

EAST (1) -- EAST BLOC DEMOCRACY -- OF A SORT

BUT MORE THAN ANY OTHER PEOPLE IN EASTERN EUROPE, THE HUNGARIANS HAVE A TRADITION OF -- AND APTITUDE FOR -- PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE, SOMETHING ACKNOWLEDGED BY THE TIMES 100 YEARS AGO. THEIR IMPRESSIVE PARLIAMENT BUILDING DOMINATES THE BUDAPEST SKYLINE. THE NEW ELECTORAL LAW IS AN ATTEMPT TO REKINDLE THIS HERITAGE AND TO GIVE NEW SCOPE TO THAT SPIRIT OF COMPETITION INTRODUCED SO SUCCESSFULLY INTO THE ECONOMY.

REMARKABLE THOUGH THEY MAY BE, THE EVENTS OF THE LAST FEW DAYS SHOULD NOT BE SEEN AS HERALDING ANY SIGNIFICANT CHANGES. ALL THE CANDIDATES, WHETHER MINISTERS OR IMPRISONED WRITERS, MUST ACCEPT THE COMMUNIST PARTY PROGRAMME AND DEBATE ISSUES OF PERSONALITY RATHER THAN POLICIES.

HUNGARIAN MPS RECEIVE NO SALARY, VIRTUALLY NO EXPENSES AND NOT EVEN THE USUAL PERKS OF FREE TELEPHONE OR SECRETARIAL HELP. THOSE WHO STAND, AND LOSE, WILL PERHAPS QUESTION WHETHER THE OFFICIAL CONSOLATION PRIZE -- THE CHANCE TO BE A RESERVE MP -- IS AN ADEQUATE REWARD. FINDING A MINIMUM OF 85,704 CANDIDATES FOR THE PARLIAMENTARY AND LOCAL ELECTIONS MAY NOT PROVE EASY.

CLEARLY, AS THE MEETINGS LAST WEEK SHOWED, FOR THE DISSIDENTS THE CHANCE TO AIR THEIR GRIEVANCES IN PUBLIC IS SOME SORT OF RECOMPENSE, BUT THE FACT THAT EVEN THE MOST IMPRESSIVE AMONG THEM WERE DEFEATED -- INCLUDING THEIR FIGUREHEAD, LASZLO RAJK -- IS DEMORALIZING.

RAJK IS THE SON OF A FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER EXECUTED BY THE RAKOSI REGIME BEFORE 1956 BUT LATER REHABILITATED IN OFFICIAL PARTY PUBLICATIONS. AN ARCHITECT -- UNLIKE THE ECCENTRIC POETS WHO MAINLY COMPRISE THE DISSIDENT ESTABLISHMENT -- AND A GIFTED SPEAKER, HE GIVES EVERY IMPRESSION THAT HE COULD BECOME A SKILFUL POLITICIAN.

TWO YEARS AGO HIS HOME, WHICH HAS BECOME A A REGULAR MEETING PLACE FOR DISSIDENTS, WAS RAIDED BY THE POLICE AND HIS SAMIZDAT PUBLICATIONS CLOSED. LAST WEEK RAJK STOOD IN A BUDAPEST WARD INHABITED BY FEW CARD-CARRYING MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT BUREAUCRACY.

HIS SELECTION MEETING WAS MORE CROWDED THAN ANY OTHER IN THE CITY, WITH MANY CONSTITUENTS HAVING TO WAIT OUTSIDE. BRITISH JOURNALISTS WHO TRIED TO ENTER WERE MET WITH A BYZANTINE LIST OF REQUIREMENTS. THOSE WHO FULFILLED THEM STILL FAILED TO GET IN BECAUSE OFFICIALS CLAIMED NEVER TO HAVE HEARD OF THEIR NEWSPAPERS.

RAJK'S OPPONENT WAS NO ONE OF ANY ACCOUNT AND RAJK WAS EXPECTED TO WIN. BUT, ACCORDING TO HIS SUPPORTERS, THE HALL HAD BEEN PACKED WITH PARTY MEMBERS TWO HOURS BEFORE THE SELECTION COMMITTEE MET. AS THERE IS NO PROVISION IN THE NEW ELECTORAL LAW FOR AN INDEPENDENT COUNTING OF VOTES, RAJK'S SUPPORTERS FELT THEY HAD BEEN CHEATED. AN APPEAL WAS LODGED, RAJK, UNLIKE HIS SUPPORTERS, IS PHILOSOPHICAL ABOUT THE LIKELY OUTCOME.

THE EXERCISE WAS NOT WITHOUT VALUE, HOWEVER. IT SHOWED CONCLUSIVELY THAT HOWEVER CONTENT MINISTERS MIGHT BE TO UNDERGO QUESTIONING ONCE EVERY FIVE YEARS, THEY WERE NOT YET READY TO TOLERATE IT IN THE PLENARY SESSIONS OF PARLIAMENT.

TL

Tamas (Bio)

DOMESTIC POLITICS

4. Samizdat Periodical Describes Illegalities at Nominating Meetings

Summary: *The 1985 Hungarian national elections are over, and as the first test of the country's new electoral law they have given the regime a mild public relations victory. Whether or not this success has been deserved is still hotly debated, but as the latest issue of the samizdat periodical A Hirmondo shows, for the country's outspoken dissidents and independent, reform-minded intellectuals, the outcome of that debate is of little consequence: for them little has changed.*

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With the completion of the parliamentary and local council elections and subsequent run-off elections, the first since the introduction of the country's new electoral law (Law III/1983),¹ a fascinating and at the same time controversial chapter was concluded in Hungarian parliamentary politics. After nearly four decades of elections conducted according to the "expanded" democratic principle of "one man, one vote, one candidate," in 1983 Hungary's communist regime decided to tinker with this time-tested, fool-proof formula and came up with the following in its stead: "one man, one vote, several candidates, one program." This modified concept has made it mandatory for each constituency to put forward at least two candidates, but as before it still requires all candidates to embrace the party's policies as stated in the PPF's election program.

Understandably, the question everyone was asking was why this change in the system was made. This included loyal party incumbents, who had never had to raise a finger "to earn the trust" of their constituencies; the average citizen, who, however reluctantly, had just begun to accept the fact that he had no say in such matters; and the Kremlin and its loyalist allies, while carefully making certain that their own peoples learned as little about Hungary's experiments as possible.²

According to the official explanation, the move was prompted by a collective desire to strengthen "socialist democracy,"³ and some in the West saw it as a real "democratic start" undertaken by a benevolently dictatorial regime.⁴

As suggested, however, by the on-the-scene reports from some of the pre-election nominating meetings, published in the latest issue of *A Hirmondo*,⁵ and the recent admission of a top PPF official that widespread complaints and irregularities

did indeed take place,⁶ officials in Moscow had very little reason to worry, and the Western press may have been too hasty with its optimistic predictions.

Two Cases Widely Publicized in the West. Two of the independent bids for candidacy that did attract world attention involved the dissident architect Laszlo Rajk, the son of a former government minister executed during the Stalinist purges, and the dissident philosopher Gaspar Miklos Tamas. Their attempts have been justly regarded in the West as courageous and unique in the Soviet bloc. While acknowledging reports of foul play on the part of the organizers in preventing these independent candidates⁶ from succeeding, however, the tendency in the Western press has been to give the regime credit just for making it possible for them to make a stand. After reading the following eyewitness accounts, however, one cannot help but wonder whether that credit had really been earned.

1.* Case Number One

Scene: Budapest, 13th Parliamentary Constituency

Date: 18 and 22 April 1985

It has been proven time and again that the era of truly sophisticated and refined dictatorship has not arrived in Hungary. We are still living in the phase of a rather direct form of dictatorship.

Laszlo Rajk

The independent nomination that had been most embarrassing for the regime had been that of Laszlo Rajk. His very name, as *A Hirmondo's* reporter on the scene put it, was "disturbing to the official ear,"⁷ and he was, moreover, a well known member of the democratic opposition. Add to this the fact that the constituency in which he sought nomination included universities with hundreds of students of voting age, and the regime had real cause for concern, concern that these "irresponsible young people might actually make him a candidate."

Perhaps because of a lack of instructions from above, the first nominating meeting held at Rajk's place of employment, the Iparterv enterprise, was "surprisingly low-key and calm," according to the reporter. There were many in the room who had not been filled in by either side, which made this first meeting, according to *A Hirmondo*, "less degrading and less tasteless" than those in the past. Although many of those present were supporters of the system, some of them voted to put Rajk on the ballot, which helped him win 40% of the vote, more than the one-third he needed to be nominated. One would have expected, said the reporter, that Rajk's program would be received with "horror, indignation, and contempt," given the composition of the audience, but at the first meeting none of this was apparent. In fact, Rajk's nomination speech, which

touched on the country's increasingly serious economic problems, the environment, the situation of the poor, forced labor (which many in the audience did not even know existed), the lot of the Hungarian minorities abroad, the role of parliament, and the housing situation, was received with curiosity, although many felt that Rajk was looking at socialism "through dark glasses, magnifying the mistakes, and downgrading the achievements." Since his criticism was abstract, some argued, he would not make a good deputy.

Only a group of Stalinists, who at this meeting were still in the minority and who apparently "confused the election meeting with a police interrogation," accused him of antistate activities and attacked him for even having the audacity to run for election. The atmosphere of the meeting up to this point, however, had been generally fair, if sometimes heated, and it was not until toward the end that instructions from above about specific "preventive action" finally arrived. Knowing what to do at last, the local party secretary asked those present to "think for a moment" about the views and the type of people Rajk was representing, but at least for the moment he failed to change the minds of 40% of the voters.

It was at the second nomination meeting that the regime showed its true colors. During the four days that had elapsed since the first meeting it had time to chart a clear strategy designed to "stop Rajk no matter what it takes," according to A *Hirmondo*. To ensure the success of this strategy, the nomination hall was packed by party activists hours before the meeting was scheduled to begin, although some Rajk supporters did manage to fight their way in. It became evident soon after the start of the meeting that what was to follow would not be "an intellectual debate but psychological war and heckling." In the course of his speech, Rajk was constantly interrupted and anyone rising to speak on his behalf was shouted down.

The most blatant indication that the organizers were not going to leave matters to chance was the way the votes were counted. The arbitrary manner in which the number of people present and the percentage of votes received by the individual candidates was determined ignited impassioned complaints, but the election committee refused to order a recount. This despite the fact that the official figures, according to which Rajk and the other spontaneously nominated, non-PPF candidate Dr. Laszlo Sardy "just missed" the 33.3% required to become a candidate by receiving 29.6% and 29.1%, respectively, of the total vote, were radically different from those arrived at by two groups of independent observers. According to their slightly differing data, the two independent candidates gained more than the required minimum. A fourth count performed by members of an independent research group made up of lawyers showed that the organizers had "overestimated" the number of citizens present by more than a third.

Yet overall, the reporter concluded, despite the questionable circumstances of Rajk's failure to win nomination, the heckling, shouting, and cheating experienced at these meetings made them "enjoyably different" from the traditional, Soviet-style "ordaining ceremonies." This was the exception, however, as at later nominating meetings members of the opposition were not even allowed into the hall.

Commenting on the new electoral law and his own defeat, Rajk insisted that he had no regrets. The meetings presented an opportunity to clear up some of the public's confusion about the democratic opposition and to establish a precedent for the future. Without actually testing the system, he pointed out, any allegations about its unfairness would have been on shaky ground. Now that this had been done, he said, it could rightly be asserted that within the framework of the existing system truly independent candidates with progressive programs of their own would not be allowed in the country's representative bodies. In any case, he felt, by the time of the next elections in 1990, the law would have been tightened to ensure that incidents of the type that occurred in his constituency would not recur.

2. Case Number Two

Scene: Budapest, 14th Parliamentary Constituency

Date: 18 and 22 April 1985

There I stood behind the microphone, looking at their pale, grinning, nightmare-like, and sweaty faces; as I watched them I felt a sense of aversion and heartfelt pity.

Gaspar Mikos Tamas

It was in this constituency that Gaspar Miklos Tamas made his unsuccessful bid for candidacy.⁹ According to Tamas's account of the proceedings to *A Hirmondo*, the nominating halls had been packed with party activists already at the first meeting, and the mood of the crowd was hostile from the beginning. From the moment his name was put forward, Tamas was the target of orchestrated attacks, led by his prominent fellow nominee, Foreign Minister Dr. Peter Varkonyi, and the first secretary of the district party committee, who used a prepared sheet to list the crimes allegedly committed by Tamas.

At the second meeting the atmosphere was even uglier: "Pig!" "Idiot!" "Traitor!" "Provocateur!" were only some of the insults hurled at the dissident, as he calmly continued to outline his program. A young man who stood up to speak in his support was quickly surrounded by "fist-shaking, athletically built" men shouting things like "Beat it, bastard!" A young woman supporter of Tamas was

promised "a punch in the nose" by a burly, commando-type character if she did not stop complaining about what A *Hirmondo* described as this organized lynch-mob like behavior.

Under these circumstances, explained Tamas, it was little wonder that objective observers who might have been present became intimidated. Many who were not frightened were sadly misinformed about the issues he raised. But then, he told his interviewer, he had had no illusions about the outcome. Like Rajk, he had merely hoped to take advantage of the forum of the nominating meeting to express his views about the concept of democracy, the role of parliament, and the Hungarian minority in Romania and Czechoslovakia and to expose the new electoral law for what it was: "significant as a gesture, but a deception as an effective statutory provision." It was a deception, he said, for the following reasons:

All candidates must accept the PPF's program

The institution of nominating meetings unequivocally favored organized groups

The law did not risk anything, as all nominations had to be approved by the National Election Presidium

The law did not allow pre-election campaigning, which would help nominees familiarize their electorate with their program

It was the nominating meeting and not the election itself that was politically decisive, and there people had to vote by open ballot

The law perpetuated the confusion about the role of parliament.

In sum, Tamas pointed out, the new electoral law of 1983 was "a remnant of a bygone reform period, inadvertently left behind, which does not go well with the present policy of the party." However, he conceded, even the current "overcensored ideological twilight was preferable to uninformed nothing."

3. Case Number Three

Scene: Budapest, 34th Parliamentary Constituency

Date: April [date still unknown] and 9 May 1985

Let us take the constitution seriously, which states that parliament is the highest organ of state rule and the guarantor of popular sovereignty.

Tamas Bauer

What made these nominating meetings different from the other two described was that the candidate proposed in addition to the PPF's nominees was not a member of the democratic opposition. He was Tamas Bauer, the reformist economist who is a member of the Economic Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and whose articles and studies have frequently appeared in official publications.

Determined to make the first meeting an "exemplary" event, the organizers (numbering between 15 and 20) had made elaborate preparations to ensure that everything would go according to schedule. According to *A Hirmondo*, an hour before the meeting was to begin, busloads of people had been brought in from two big local enterprises, and they alone practically filled the room. The few people who had turned up spontaneously could hardly find a seat. (The reason there were only a few of them was that the organizers had omitted to inform the residents of the constituency of the place and time of the meeting.) To make their wait more pleasant, the participants were offered entertainment in the form of short propaganda films and poetry recitals.

The meeting started on time and the chairwoman formally introduced the PPF's candidates. The problem began when, not satisfied with the official choices, a voter decided to put forward Bauer's name. Annoyed that her carefully planned schedule of events had been thrown off course, according to *A Hirmondo*, the chairwoman impatiently called on Bauer to state whether he accepted the PPF's program. Bauer had hardly begun to reply when he was interrupted by hecklers shouting that as a nonresident he was not wanted. The chairwoman herself kept interrupting him, exasperatedly demanding a "clear answer" to the question.

Assuring the audience that he would uphold the PPF's program apparently did not satisfy the party functionaries among the audience as they rose one by one to attack Bauer for "criticizing the party and the leadership" and for acting "as if he had all the answers."

The seemingly unending barrage of attacks directed at Bauer did not happen by accident, as the chairwoman, taking her cues from other organizers scattered around the room, only called on those whom she knew would comment "correctly." Only by walking up to the microphone without permission was one person finally able to speak in Bauer's defense. The result: the young economist received only 39 of the 272 votes cast.

At the second meeting even greater care was taken to ensure that Bauer would not be nominated. By the time the organizers had opened the doors there was only standing room left, which was filled within minutes. Hundreds of mostly local residents were thus forced to remain outside. Under these circumstances, the outcome of the meeting, according to *A Hirmondo*, could not

be a surprise: the almost uniformly hostile crowd would not only not be swayed but would not even bother to pay attention to Bauer's carefully prepared speech. The result of the second meeting was that the two PPF candidates received 318 and 312 votes, respectively, from the total of 318 voters, while Bauer was able to must only 72 votes.

More "Irregularities." In the two other cases reported by A *Hirmondo* the nominating meetings took place in a similarly intimidating atmosphere, characterized by arbitrary decisions on the part of the organizers, who had no qualms about changing the rules of the game as it went along. The common feature of these two cases was that independent nominees were proposed from the floor whose views did not fully coincide with official policy.

In the fourth parliamentary constituency of Budapest it was the biologist Dr. Janos Toth, an outspoken environmentalist and opponent of the proposed Gabcsikovo-Nagymaros Dam project, who was harassed, interrupted, and insulted by "concerned citizens" in a nominating hall where "order and legality" were maintained by plainclothesmen and policemen with submachine guns. The organizers' strategy worked: Toth failed to get on the ballot by receiving only 188 of the total of 762 votes.

In the ninth parliamentary constituency of Budapest, two independent nominees, Zoltan Lakner and Peter Szentmihalyi Szabo, attempted to make a stand, but they, too, were jeered at, criticized, and berated. Here the chairman of the nominating committee was especially "liberal" in his interpretation of the electoral law, as he used every trick in the book to prevent the two outsiders from outlining their programs. To ward off complaints, he used nonexistent provisions of the law to justify his actions.

At the second nominating meeting the two candidates were actually chided for almost causing a riot at the first meeting. When attempting to refute the charges leveled at them by organized critics, their microphones were repeatedly disconnected, adding to the confusion and frustration. In addition, to discourage people even more from voting the "wrong way," pictures were taken of everyone rising to speak. At the end, the organizers once again succeeded in what they had set out to accomplish: neither Lakner nor Szentmihalyi Szabo received enough votes to be nominated as candidates.

"The Chances of Independent Candidates."

In the regions east of the Elbe we are living in the grip of a strong, and although in its institutional forms diverse, a basically uniform political power.

This is how the dissident sociologist Gabor Demszky described parliamentarianism in Eastern Europe, as he compared its various institutional manifestations in the same issue of A

Hirmondo. The enormous concentration of power in the hands of the "party state" in all East European political systems, he pointed out, had meant that important decisions were made not in the representative bodies of these states but rather in the party center, by members of the Politburo. Consequently, the intended meaning of parliamentary functions has faded away. Acting as rubber stamps without power, parliamentary bodies in these states no longer considered it their duty to review or even question rules and regulations aimed at restricting personal freedom passed by various administrative agencies, often on the basis of purely subjective judgments. New and widely used phrases such as "socialist democracy" and "socialist legality" had merely been euphemisms for dictatorship and arbitrary rule.

Despite this discouraging state of affairs, Demszky continued, there had been examples of noteworthy attempts to revive parliamentarism in the Soviet bloc. In Poland, the *Znak* movement, begun in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the activities of Solidarity, and the proposed alternative of the Network (*Siec*) of workers' councils had all been promising efforts in that direction. All three initiatives had eventually been destroyed by the imposition of martial law, but they had all proved one thing: one of the most important conditions of parliamentary democracy was to have a proper basis, in other words, local and institutional democratic structures. The Polish experiments had been able to surface because of the existence of an independent union of 10,000,000 people.

It was this base, these types of institutions, Demszky argued, that the Hungarian political system continued to lack. Consequently, the few dissidents and truly independent reform-minded intellectuals who had decided to test the system had really had their task cut out for them. They had run against overwhelming odds, and hence their attempt, hampered by organized hostility, a law that left a great deal to personal interpretation, and a lack of legal remedies, had failed.

Still, Demszky concluded, the new law stood out as unique in the otherwise "harshly antidemocratic system of Hungarian law." Regrettably, however, it stood alone.

Steven Koppány

1 *Magyar Kozlony*, 27 December 1983.

2 Only the Polish press discussed the Hungarian election reforms in greater detail (see Hungarian Situation Report/8, *Radio Free Europe Research*, 21 June 1985, item 2).

3 Gyorgy Aczel, "Democracy: A Difficult School," *Valosag*, March 1985, pp. 1-17.

4 For the Western reaction, see Hungarian SR/8, *RFER*, 21 June 1985, item 2.

- 5 *A Hirmondo*, no. 7, May-June 1985, pp. 1-35.
- 6 After almost two months of official silence, PPF National Council Secretary Bela Molnar acknowledged that there had been many complaints from the public about the way in which the nominating meetings had been conducted. Some 2,000 protests had been lodged, 6 of which had been brought before a court. Forty-five of these protests, alleging dubious chairmanship, unconvincing vote counting, and the use of irritating administrative methods had been registered in parliamentary constituencies, as a result of which, in twenty-five constituencies meetings had to be held again. In addition, the legality of 25 local council nominating meetings had been questioned, and in 2 cases meetings were held again.
- 7 There has been considerable confusion among Western journalists regarding the meaning of the term "independent" within the context of the Hungarian elections. Some have mistakenly used it to describe candidates who were not among the PPF's original choice of candidates but who readily and willingly accepted its program. The term as used by *A Hirmondo* refers to a loosely knit group of dissidents, liberal economists, environmentalists, and others who are not afraid to speak out against unfair official policies.
- 8 With good reason: Janos Kadar, who in 1948 had replaced Rajk (Sr.) as Minister of Internal Affairs, had played a key role in tricking him into making the "confession that led to his execution."
- 9 He received 135 votes from the total of 956 people present at the 2 nominating meetings (Reuter, 22 April 1985).