

TWO ELECTIONS IN HUNGARY

SOME REMARKS ON THEIR HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND

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After four years of struggling for the renewal of the Hungarian labour movement through a democratic expression of the workers will, 1993 saw not one but two elections between candidates of different unions: one for national social security boards and another for works councils.

LIGA, the first non communist union confederation of Hungary, demanded free trade union elections as a means to break with the communist rule in the unions as early as 1989. It took a long time to find the legal terms in which such an election can be formulated and an efficient resistance of the former communist union leaders delayed the realization of the idea, too.

The outcome of the two elections shows the weight of the Hungarian trade unions and union confederations as they emerge from the struggles of the transition period. Democratic elections legitimate them as they are now, independently of their past.

Results show however that the factors of that past, i.e. the inertia of the masses and the tactful policies of the former trade union

*Table 1: Results of elections for social security health care board
and for works councils*

Election	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	Total
Soc. Sec.	13.1	12.8	45.2	5.3	23.6	100
Works C.*	5.7	2.2	71.7	18.6	1.8	100

Headings: 1 = LIGA; 2 = Workers' Councils; 3 = MSZOSZ; 4 = Autonomous unions; 5 = Others

apparatchiks, had a great impact on the transition process in Hungary. (1) Due to these factors, the former communist unions and their legal successors were able to maintain not only their continuity but also their majority during the transition process. Causes and factors of this outcome are well known having been analyzed in depth, several times.

(2) The elections show that the LIGA emerged from the transition period as a strong minority organization.

Although some of its members broke down seeing the results of the social security elections, I have demonstrated** that the results were consistent to the realistic expectations. LIGA put forward the idea of the social security elections as the main tool to measure the relative weight of trade union confederations convinced that it would get much more votes than it had members. Election results proved this expectation.

Industrial council elections have always been considered by

the LIGA to be inadequate in measuring the real strength of the trade union confederations in a rapidly changing environment. The new free union movement started in small groups and dispersed on the map of the country, following the geographical pattern of the sharpest labour conflicts. How could it the sporadic locals of a new grassroots movement to those of a big organization, well implanted in every workplace? It was obvious that there was a large inequality in the number of locals which was paralleled to a as result of the impetus of the political and economic changes by much smaller inequality in general influence.

Behind these inequalities in the presence at the workplaces expressed clearly by the results of the industrial council elections (shown in Table 1) one can also see string indices of the transition processes. One of them is the relatively high success of independent candidates (running not on union lists). They won 7.7 per cent of the seats in their industrial councils at the

* Without the results of the public service sector.

** In a paper analyzing predictions, claimed membership figures and election results under the title "Facing reality: an analysis of the results of social security elections".

Hungarian State Railways while taking 9.2 per cent of the seats and 10.9 per cent of the vote in the mining sector. Such figures prove that a tendency for seeking their own solutions has been born among the workers and the new trade union movement has to find a way to these workers. It has not found it: independent candidates are elected in high percentage where there are no new free unions and *vice versa*.

Even more important is the fact that once a LIGA organization is implanted in a workplace, workers tend to elect LIGA candidates much more than cumulative national figures show it and even more than they voted for LIGA candidates in the social security elections. I have already mentioned the case of the Hungarian State Railways Co. It is true that the MSZOSZ affiliated trade union got 58.8 per cent of the votes but VDSZSZ, the LIGA affiliated union, got 20.1 per cent which is the double of the LIGA's national results in on the social security elections and almost four times as much as its cumulative result in the industrial councils elections.

In the mining sector there has been relatively few local organizations. They are far minority in this sector which is still large and a traditional stronghold of the communist trade unions. Let us compare the election results of those sites where a LIGA organi-

into the distribution of organizational efficiency of LIGA affiliates.

These examples were taken in order to show the wide variety of the results. There are industries with little presence of strong LIGA unions as well as those with relatively strong presence but lower efficiency and other variations in between the two. The analysis of these results must orient the LIGA's activity during the next period.

It is better to know the real situation because we have to adapt our strategies to it. There are two main lessons the LIGA has to learn.

One of them is rather theoretical and historical: the elections we had were not those we planned. Both their timing and meaning fall closer to the MSZOSZ's desires than the LIGA's.

The elections, being carried out only in 1993, had a different

Table 3: Percentage of the votes for LIGA candidates in some industries

Industry	Total at the natl level	In presence of LIGA unions
Agriculture	3.0	45.1
Chemical industry	6.7	21.7
Construction	1.5	64.7
Food	2.9	30.4
Iron & Metal	10.6	46.1
Transport	6.1	14.8

It is clear that cumulative national level data mix up two effects: the concrete influence of a union on the workers and the frequency of its presence in workplace. Dynamic new trade unions, like LIGA, are normally stronger in the first aspect and weaker in the second. But the two aspects are linked up to each other: local influence can help the union to set up new locals and raise the frequency of its presence, while the presence is also seen as a precondition to exert an influence at the workplace. Mix-

role of that planned by those who gave birth to the idea. They did not play an active role in changing the balance of forces within the Hungarian labor movement, but simply registered the outcome of the changes which took place. It goes far beyond the present remarks discussing the causes and consequences of this fact.

It was not the LIGA's fault. It mainly came out of Hungary's particular un-revolutionary and peaceful transition as well as the fact that trade unions were and remained politically unimportant. Stark's sociological theory of *path dependency* is highly relevant in understanding the particular features of the transition in Hungary.

The second lesson is that the transition period is over. The role played by the LIGA since 1988 is now over. In the new historic phase a new strategy is needed, one which is adapted to the position of a strong and hopefully growing minority within the reshaped labor movement in Hungary.

Budapest, August 1993

Table 2: Results of works council elections in the mining sector

Population	LIGA	MSZOSZ	Indept
Mining sector	4.8	77.7	10.9
Workplaces with LIGA	25	69	2

zation is operating to the sectors cumulative results.

LIGA headquarters collected the data on election results at workplaces with LIGA affiliated local unions. They will study these data which offer a realistic insight

ing up the two, however, shows nothing definite, particularly in such a changing world as the former communist bloc.

(3) The mirror offered by the two elections is a plain one. There is no need to blame it nor to break it.

CONFERENCE WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF 165 NATIONS

The Problems of the Labor World

— Csaba Óry went to Geneva recently representing Hungarian workers at the June Conference of the International Labour Organisation. How did you become a member of the delegation?

— The trilateral delegations to the ILO Congress consist of four members, two Government representatives, one employer and one union representative. The international practice is that the representative unions come to some sort of an agreement as to a system. Usually, a rotation method is chosen. LIGA would have liked to achieve this years ago. The problem was that rather than doing so, we came to various compromise solutions which skirted the issue because of political disputes. Last year, for instance, it was not a union official, but the Secretary of the "(ET)"* who represented the workers. This year, the unions finally succeeded in agreeing to a rotation system, beginning with the results of the elections. The fact that they accepted the proposal this Spring may be attributed the then approaching elections and our unwillingness to create new conflicts amongst ourselves. It can also be attributed to the fact that through four years of trying, LIGA had never succeeded in going to the Conference.

— What is the purpose of this grand conference?

— The ILO is the labor world's most important international organ and has been operating since the 1910's. It has been a trilateral institution since its inception and has nations as its members. The chief decision-making body of the ILO is the annual conference. The preparation of a serious convention takes two to three years, on the average. This is then sent to the member states which then discuss it. Then, they decide whether or not they wish to conclude a convention or perhaps they may find a proposal to be sufficient or remove the question from the agenda. If yes, then the variant which evolved during the course of debate will be returned to the individual member states where it is re-debated and it is placed on the agenda for the following year.

The entire delegation takes part in the plenary session and trilateral negotiations are undertaken in committee, as well. The Director of the ILO makes a report as to annual operations and proposes the debate of one or two more important topics. This year, a socially secure situation, social questions and professional cooperation were given roles in this report.

— What did the Hungarian delegation contribute to the ILO's conventions? What can be considered our own proposal?

— In my address, I spoke of the chief topic. I spoke of the social situation in Hungary and of difficulties stemming from labor relations and I called for professional cooperation between the various nations, to be coordinated by the ILO.

We closed the debate on heavy industrial catastrophes by passing a convention. A committee examined the details of this. We succeeded in achieving, I am speaking of the entire Hungarian delegation here, that labor organs take part in training and that training should not be exclusively for individuals.

Cooperation will be easier from now on because the ILO has opened a regional office in Budapest. Mariann Varga, labor attorney at the ELTE Law School, took part in the conference for a second year as a LIGA expert. She took part in the work of the Part-Time Workers Committee. Protection for part-time employees is much less and much more limited than that of full-time workers. The Conference decided to pass a convention next year as to the protection of part-time workers.

— These conventions may be made part of the legal systems of individual nations...

— ...and become part of domestic law. For instance, in 1937, a minimum wage, paid vacations and the length of the work day were established in Hungary for the first time. This was based on the 1928 ILO Convention. This was a draft law which was brought into Hungary by way of a decree of the Prime minister and made law in 1937. The question was finally regulated in 1941 by way of trilateral committees determining a minimum wage.

It was on basis of the ILO convention that free unions were established during the last years of the Kadar system, as Hungary ratified the pertinent conventions in 1975 (Conventions 87 and 98).

— Who did you meet at the conference?

— I was able to meet with just about every one of our important partners. I met with the Secretary General of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, Enso Friso, with whom I reiterated that LIGA would like to join the International Confederation of Free Trade unions. I met with Jack Otero, American Deputy Labor Secretary, with whom we discussed the possibilities for LIGA activist participation in American Government programs for Hungarian labor affairs, in training programs and in an exchange of experiences. I met with the union representative of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the vice-president of the European Federation of Trade Unions, and also with representatives of the French, German, and Italian unions and with our friends from the Croatian, Polish, Rumanian, and Bulgarian free trade unions. I was happy to finally have the chance to have a longer discussion with the Secretary General of FGTB of Belgium and we agreed to stronger cooperative ties in the future. As a first step, FGTB will assist the LIGA Academy with seminars in the future.

— How does international opinion judge LIGA?

— Everyone was interested in the elections. I was surprised that in contrast to our own bitter judgment, we had expected better results, the foreigners considered LIGA's finish to be very positive, indeed. The most extreme position was that of the representative of Poland's Solidarity. He said that we had achieved a great success. "If you weren't there, the Communists would have taken over 70%," was his opinion. The majority opinion was that this 10—13 percent is an encouraging finish because it showed that the people support union pluralism and appreciate free unions.

L. K.

* INTEREST BECONCILIATION COMMITTEE

MAINTAINING THE MAINTENANCE MEN

This is the second time that workers have left their posts at a MALÉV company. Even though the mechanics strike, like the June pilots' strike, was only for pay raises, the undeveloped ownership relations in domestic privatization played a significant role on the progression of the situation this far. The Independent Union of Airplane Mechanics successfully battled American-Hungarian management for seven days.

Difficult Legacy

The conflict at the joint venture company is as old as the company itself. MALÉV management engaged in "secret" talks with Lockheed from 1990 on, but details came to light only a year later, and these are only partial. Despite requests by the unions, MALÉV negotiators treated the details of the contract draft as a business and company secret. It seemed that Lockheed was dictating as the study regarding the creation of a joint venture company was prepared by the American party.

Despite promises by the State Property Agency to the contrary, MALÉV management and the Operative Committee made their decision without consulting the effected one thousand mechanics. At the time of the creation of Aeroplex of Central Europe Repair and Maintenance company, MALÉV was selling mainly its workers' knowledge. Lockheed, on the other hand, obtained the entire civil technical service and airplane repair service for much less than the value of the planned activity.

Two Sides

The Americans wanted to take 650—700 workers into the joint venture company. MALÉV was only able to get them to hire a further 200 workers by agreeing to be billed at the cost of work done by Aeroplex and its own profit. Thus, MALÉV, shareholder in Aeroplex, is interest-

ed in raising costs, but MALÉV, as the customer, is placed at a disadvantage by higher costs. MALÉV management was hoping that it would have a business interest in this dual system. Aeroplex justified these hopes, they showed such profit in just half a year, that they were able to raise their registered initial capital by 50%. The Deed of Registration even made the commencement of flights a possibility, but the true goal was to obtain FAA approval, which would allow them to service the machines of other airlines, as well. Especially considering the fact that they billed 38 dollars per hour for maintenance and paid their mechanics only 2 dollars per hour.

War of the Professionals

With time, however, it seemed as if MALÉV and its co-owner, Alitalia, hoping to stay in the airline race, were thinking about other solutions for aircraft maintenance. This is underscored by the fact that ever more criticism was made of the quality and speed of service. MALÉV initiated the re-evaluation of the contract and authorized Alitalia to do so. Besides this, MALÉV owes Aeroplex some 380 million forints. Thus, it can re-finance its own payment problems and weaken Aeroplex's position.

Hidden Strike Breakers

At the beginning of the summer, before the conflict came about, MALÉV pilots began to strike. A few weeks later, on June 30, the collective contract signed by Aeroplex Kft. and the Independent Union of Airplane Mechanics expired. The union proposed negotiations for the conclusion of a new contract, but management was unwilling to enter into negotiations regarding pay raises. After 14 days of wasted negotiations, the union's strike committee announced a strike by the workers on August 19.

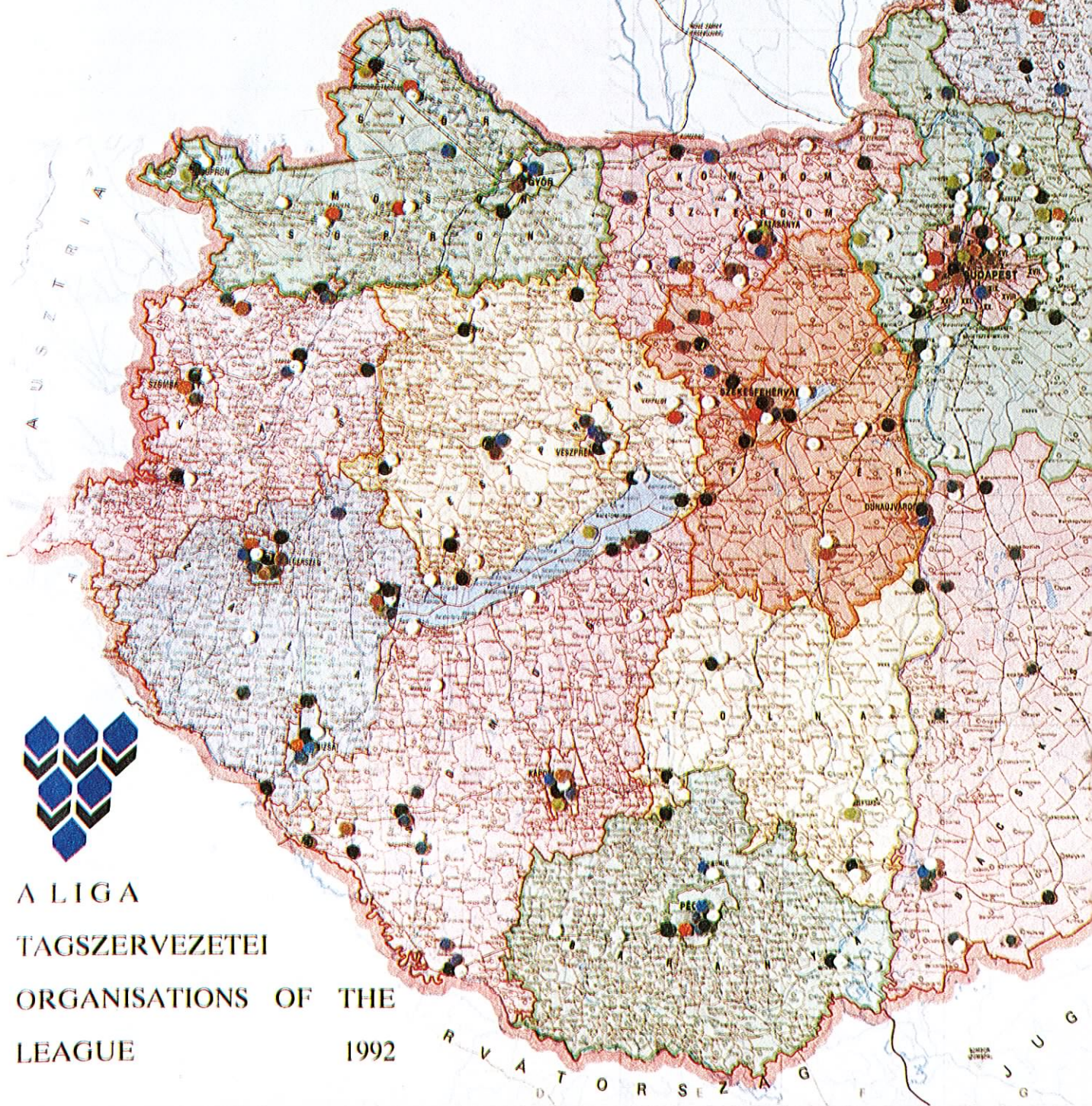
Both parties lined up great resources prior to the labor conflict. The maintenance men were sure that their work could not be replaced, or, at most, only partially and at great expense. Without their signature, no pilot would be willing to risk taking off.

Management thought that partial work stoppage would not cause any great problems and made favorable noises as to negotiations for the replacement of machines which had fallen out of use. In hired, according to certain accounts, the British Qualitair company to ensure enough maintenance personnel. The Brits were not told about the strike, but, unless they thought this was an unusual custom here, it must have seemed strange to them that MALÉV would move them from hotel to hotel. Finally, both parties bombarded the press with tactical statements, the result of which was that it was very difficult to see similar claims by the two parties. MALÉV was still sure that the strikers wanted a 100% wage increase when they cut their original 90% demand to 50%. MALÉV spoke of 44 thousand forints per month as the average salary, while the union claimed 32 thousand forints per month. The maintenance personnel were being paid twice the national average, according to the employer, while the union spoke of the fact that other airlines paid ten times the amount. One of management's oldest arguments against the strike announcement made before August 20 was that "the union disregards the emotional importance of St. Stephen's Day (one of Hungary's three most important national holidays, along with the anniversaries of the Revolutions of 1848 and 1956, St. Stephen's Day honors Hungary's first king on August 20)." At the same time, the union did not begin its strike on August 20 out of regard for the guests arriving for the Formula 1 races.

LIGA

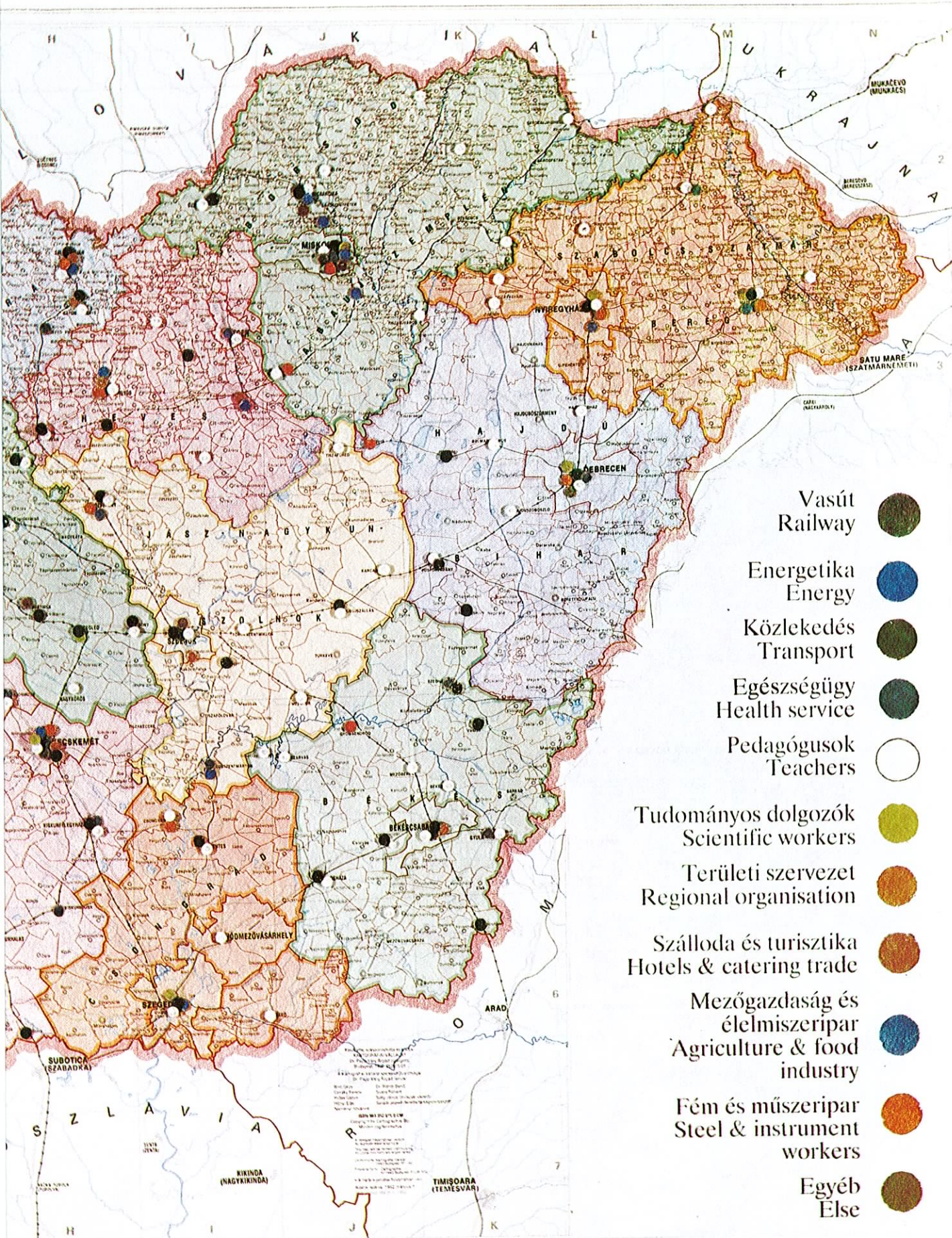


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TAGSZERVEZETEI
ORGANISATIONS OF THE
LEAGUE

1992



Strike

The next week, however, the negotiating delegations, at the end of their ropes, looked at one another with looks that could kill. MALÉV threatened to withdraw travel and other privileges from the strikers, while the union, through LIGA, made contact with the International Transport Organization, which did not rule out the possibility of an international solidarity strike. MALÉV, however, claimed that it was no MALÉV, the owner, which hired the English personnel, but MALÉV the customer, and that this, therefore, does not count as strike breaking.

The English soon got to work, as management refused to budge from its offer of 20% raises and 10% raises in January and again in June. The union was left to consider the choice that if they don't strike, they lose their pay increases, whereas if

they do, they lose their jobs. Following the war of words, however, there was no room for retreat. Thus, on August 25, after the union held a successful press conference and Aeroplex brought out Lockheed's personnel manager, the night shift went on strike.

Delayed closing

From this point on, MALÉV focused all its energies on replacing its lost flights. If the opportunities allowed, it combined flights, rented planes, together with staff, from other airlines. Smaller transit repairs were made by Hungarian and foreign on board engineers. It was unable to find a solution for the repair of Soviet machines and the number of machines confined to the ground multiplied after two days of the strike. The union suspended the strike on August 27, claiming flight safety reasons. This step clearly dis-

turbed management, which was prepared for a standing war, who wanted to first resolve the disputes among the owners. The beginning of the next week saw three more rounds of negotiations. Management increased its original offer to 34 percent, but said that this was sufficient wage increase for a year and a half. The union did not accept this, at first, because the total amount given would be less than the original offer. Later, however, after the company made its financial status public, the union agreed. The agreement was set down in writing. The union would stop the strike, but would not waive its right to strike. No strike participant may be placed in an unfavorable position for his activities. The union thanked LIGA, which stood in solidarity with the strikers, as well as the trade unions and ITF for their support.

L. K.

THE START OF THE SCHOOL YEAR — ACCORDING TO PLAN

It was up to the wisdom of the negotiating delegations of the unions and the Government whether or not the school year would begin according to plan this year. This is because the Finance Minister declared, during his May speech to Parliament, that the Government has no intention of introducing the wage system laid down by law in 1994. In reply, the unions representing public employees, the Teachers' Democratic Trade Union, which is affiliated with LIGA, and later LIGA's health organization placed a strike on the horizon for September and voiced their dissatisfaction at a demonstration of some 20 thousand people in June. In

August, however, the Government was forced to compromise. True, the financial structure it worked out placed part of the burden on the local governments, but Social Security Councils had to play a part in creating the necessary funds, some 72 billion forints. At the time of the preparation of the draft legislation, no calculations were made as to how much the wage system would cost. The new wage system is a great burden. Even union representatives recognize this fact. The public service in Hungary is paid badly, however, and if we do not wish health or educational service quality to drop, we must have higher wages.

The members of the strike committee did not agree to the proposal that the Government would support these institutions under certain conditions because those living in wealthy areas and small villages must receive the same quality.

Finally, in September, leaving the protests of the local governments unheeded, the Finance Minister submitted the proposal fought for by the unions to parliament. Now, it's Parliament's turn. In any case, parents, teachers and children alike could be happy that the school year has begun.

L. K.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Honorariums, Resignations

On the Agenda of the meeting of the Social Security Councils of July 30 was the draft By-Laws, summaries of discussions which would serve to prepare and be a basis for the 1994 budget.

Before this, Magyar Hírlap (Hungarian News) published an article regarding the pay to be received by representatives to the Councils. This article had no basis, as Act LXXXIV of 1991 forbade the payment of the representatives to the Councils with the exception of the members of the presidium and the Oversight Committee.

The draft By-Laws, aside from mention of honorariums, included the clauses which needed to be amended. LIGA representatives prepared such motions for amendment. The most important questions, in their opinion, were the following: clauses which would regulate the relationships between the Chairman and the General Assembly of the Council (how often the General Assembly would sit in session annually, what rights would be given the Presidium, what rights would be given, on basis of the previous item, to the leaders of the administrative organs). They were, however, unable to arrive at a common position, accepted by all, as to the amount of honorarium to be paid. After extended debate, the LIGA representatives to the Health Affairs Council agreed that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Councils should be considered to be full-time officials.

Amendments

The General Assembly of the Retirement Insurance Council accepted, with the exception of motions regarding honorariums, the motions to amend made by LIGA representatives. Thus, the General Assembly shall meet quarterly. The most important rights regarding economic relations and the re-structuring and development of the administrative organs were not relinquished to the Presidium.

These amendments, as passed, make it possible for the Councils to work in a democratic manner. Pál Forgács agreed with these motions to amend, but resigned in protest over insulting accusations hurled during the General Assembly and

over the high honorarium approved for the Presidium (Sándor Nagy, Chairman of the Council, would be paid 108 thousand forints per month). LIGA list representative Zsuzsa Ferge expressed her solidarity with Pál Forgács by resigning from the Oversight Committee.

The Health Insurance Council proceeded in a different manner. A strong Presidium was established in the issue of the relations between the Presidium and the General Assembly, thus weakening the General Assembly's role. The representatives did not agree to accept the Chairman and Vice-Chairman as full-time officials.

In the final analysis, the By-Laws accepted by the Retirement Insurance Council makes democratic operations possible. The By-Laws passed by the Health Insurance Council do make the involvement of the General assembly in material work possible, but we have to be aware of the fact that these By-Laws will make such work more difficult in certain instances.

Expected Disputes

We can, however, count on disputes arising regarding the financing and operations of social security. Representatives will be taking part in these disputes as having been elected by lists, but being independent nonetheless. As far as LIGA is concerned, the question of how to develop a relationship with the representatives that will allow them to act as LIGA representatives without compromising their independence is unavoidable.

It can be said that it will often be difficult to develop a political position in social security issues. The various positions cannot always be seen to be contradictory. More complicated relationships will be reflected. One or another variant may be difficult to demonstrate as better to the voters and the insured.

With or Without Honorarium

When we speak of honorariums, we must absolutely take into consideration the unwritten rules and norms which have developed to date in the social security field. Since 1992 and prior to the establishment of the Councils, the system was

run by Oversight Committees. The members of the Committees, ten each, were paid 75% of the salaries of Ministers as honorarium. These positions were not filled by members as full-time jobs and Parliament set their honorariums.

The majority of Committee members were given their positions on basis of being delegated their by employers. It would be difficult to accept that for the work which they had done until now and for which they were paid, no pay should be given now that it is being done by a Council and the work may even be greater. The prestige, judgment and independence of officials is largely determined by the amount of compensation they are given. Naturally, the demand that compensation should be in proportion to the work done is fair. It is difficult to establish a system of payment which would simultaneously guarantee enough prestige for the officials and which is acceptable to society. Even Pál Forgács, speaking of his rightful objections to payment as established in the By-Laws, expressed the opinion that the responsibility and the tasks in front of the Councils would justify even twice the amount of payment which was determined, for those who actively participate. Payments should be made not per title or status, but for work done.

It is important to LIGA that those effected be given as much information as possible and thus allow the Councils to operate democratically. We should view the resignations of Pál Forgács and Gábor Horn as warnings and we must do everything in the interests of creating democracy within the Councils.

Social Security Workshop

LIGA's various bodies and organs must prepare themselves to make responsible decisions as to social security issues. In the interest of achieving this, we have planned a Social Security Workshop with the participation of those who are on LIGA's list and who are part of the Councils. This workshop would create an opportunity for Social Security representatives to discuss their concepts and programs with experts on the list. Of course, these discussions will be open to LIGA members, as well. *Mihály Kogon*

NEW TAX SYSTEM, LESS JOBLESS

Agreement in the Interest Reconciliation Council

An agreement was reached during the September 4 meeting of the Interest Reconciliation Committee. The Government proposed a personal income tax system for 1994 which would put less of a strain on those who earn less, but a greater burden on those who earn more. The new tax structure, if approved by Parliament, will be most favorable to those of middle incomes. The unions first proposed, as regards personal income tax, that the tax-free zone be increased from 100 thousand at present to 120 thousand. The Government, however, agreed not to tax Social Security contributions, leading the unions to agree to 110 thousand. This means that we only have to pay taxes if we earn more than 122 thousand forints per year. In the same way, the unions would have liked to have those earning over 1 million forints per year pay 44% in taxes, but because retirement contributions were exempted, they agreed to 550 thousand forints, which really only causes significant tax increases if one earns over 1 million forints per year.

The Government planned on rearranging burdens and giving benefits to employees in the amount of 10 billion forints, which would be deducted from the general reserve planned into the budget. The unions would've liked to preserve employees' discounts, as well. This, however, has fallen victim to the public service employee wage tariff system which would come into effect from January 1 and would rearrange wages to a significant degree.

According to the agreement, the Government will take steps to "extend the tax base" which would draw a portion of income which is kept secret into the tax system. As far as companies are concerned, it will introduce the minimum tax, which stands at 2%, regardless of whether or not a company was profitable. Last year 40% of companies were operating "at a loss" and did not pay corporate taxes. All payments in kind shall be henceforth taxed by the Government, with the exception of work clothes, commuting expenses, and recreation. The employees, however, were able to battle out a raise to 1200 forints in the amount that can be paid monthly for meals. This tax break alone means 5-6 billion forints annually.

Employers have objected to solidarity benefits, paid by them and growing annually. Solidarity burden has increased as the number of unemployed has increased. Now, however, the solidarity fund is in the black, because the expected 760 thousand unemployed did not materialize, the number growing to "only" 700 thousand. Thus, according to law, the extra money must be spent to create new jobs and for retraining, this money going into the Employment Fund, which would thus grow to 21.4 billion forints next year.

The burden of solidarity on entrepreneurs would grow to 7.2 percent. Employers must pay a further 0.3% into the Wage Guarantee Fund, because the employees of bankrupt companies will be entitled to solidarity from next year. Employees, however, will pay only 1.5%, or 5% less than previously, in solidarity contributions.

The expenses for child care were discussed as an issue separate from taxes, and will thus be decided at the November plenary meeting where family supplements will be discussed.

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CARELESS INTERPRETERS OF THE LAW

All officials are entitled to protection

In the recent past, the number of pink slips sent to union officials has been increasing as have lectures to small unions by traditional unions. The one common thread is that these all refer to the Labor Code, usually to the detriment of LIGA officials, and that they do not take into account this year's amendment of the Labor Code.

1. Mrs. György Sántosi of Csurgó, of whose lawsuit we have kept you informed in these pages, has not been reinstated despite the Supreme Court's decision. The employer re-fired her, referring to specific sections of the Labor Code, saying that her union did not win during the elections.
2. The union in place at the Debrecen Post Office is limiting the rights of the Workers' Councils belonging to the Independent Postal Workers' Interest Protection Federation, also on basis of the Labor Code. They proceeded to

lecture the Chairman of the IPWIPF in a letter dated July 19 regarding the Labor Code. The problem is, they did so mistakenly. For them to declare that they are unwilling to work with another organization in any way it is not necessary to state gleefully that the officials of the non-representative unions are not entitled to job protection. Especially when it isn't so. Paragraph 7 of Act XIII of 1993 (regarding the amendment of Act XXVIII of 1991 regarding the protection of union property and equality of opportunity of employees' organizations) amends Paragraph 29 of Act XXII of 1992 regarding the Labor Code!

Paragraph 29 of the Labor Code states that job protection is only guaranteed the officials of the union considered representative by the employer (Paragraph 28). The newly amended Paragraph 29, however, states that the non-representative unions' officials are denied only the right to protest, if this is not in contradic-

tion to other laws (Paragraph 23), not the right to job protection enjoyed by union officials.

Insofar as the above amendment wipes out any reference to Paragraph 28 in Paragraph 29, all union officials, regardless of representation status, are entitled to job protection.

Note: Union officials are not fired only on basis of this paragraph these days. István Mészáros of KÜHNE in Mosonmagyaróvár was fired by extraordinary dismissal, in which case he had no official protection. József Vámos of Békéscsaba was dismissed "legally," that is, Sárrét Milk asked LIGA's accession. The fact that LIGA did, not grant it is another question. That is why the company sued LIGA. The employer ended up drawing the short straw in this lawsuit! At any rate, the employees' delegation to the Interest Reconciliation Council is preparing an amendment to the Labor Code in reply to the harassment of union officials.

K-

GERMAN RELATIONS

From September 27 to 30, LIGA President Csaba Öry and International VP Agnes Hadházy visited Düsseldorf and Bonn at the invitation of the German Union Federation, DGB. The LIGA officials met with representatives of the Hans Böckler Foundation, the representatives of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the regional head of the ÖTV — DGB public employees' union, the President of DGB and various economic, socio-political and lobbying experts. The LIGA leaders described their visit as a significant event in the relationship between LIGA and the DGB. They considered the responsibility with which DGB is handling the trade unions of Central-Eastern Europe and, thus, LIGA to be especially worthy of attention. On the last day, the delegation took part in a visit to the Mannesmann plant.



The fate of the Eastern European labor movement was also a topic of discussion. Especially valuable was the meeting with Hans-Werner Meyer, President of DGB, regarding cooperation between LIGA and DGB, the condition of Eastern European labor movements, the revival thereof, and the possible membership of LIGA in the ICFTU. During the course of the discussion, it became clear that the DGB representative would participate in the ICFTU's delegation visiting Hungary in October, after all.

NEWS

Seminars

On July 16—17, CGIL, the Italian trade union federation, organized a seminar with the Hungarian National Federation of Trade Unions (MSZOSZ) and LIGA entitled "The role of unions during the re-structuring with special attention to the economic and legal system of the Eastern-European States: Comparison of the Various models: Among the topics of the seminar were the debate of the questions pertaining to the political, privatization and market economic practices of these countries.

Bruno Trentin, Secretary General of CGIL took part, as did the Presidents of MSZOSZ and LIGA and the delegates of the Bulgarian, Rumanian and Hungarian confederations and numerous Italian Professors.

Once Again: The Democratic Union of Educators' Camp

The Teachers' Democratic Trade Union (PDSZ) organized its traditional summer continuing education program in Debrecen between August 16 and 21. In this camp, the organization of which was assisted by the American education unions, some 170 people took part from various parts of the country. The instruction took place in three topics. Courses gave assistance to local government representatives, organization builders and beginning union activists. The operation of public employees' councils was also discussed, as was the Education Code, and tasks ahead for the amendment of the Public Service Employees' Act. The camp was closely watched because of the strike readiness of public employees. The participants said that public Employees mired in the institutions are waiting for the results of negotiations. Luckily, the public employees' was never made necessary, but the traditional PDSZ show and fiendly discussions were not to be avoided in Debrecen, during the PDSZ's third successful summer event.

New Lawsuit at MAHART

As a result of the conclusion of a Collective Contract, the relationship between the Hungarian Sailors' Union and MAHART (the Hungarian Shipping Corporation) has been degrading for over a year. We can witness this most dramatically which the union filed (and won) against the employer in labor affairs cases and in those lawsuits filed by the employer against union leaders. The Industrial Council elections were unsuccessful at MAHART. The State Property Management Corporation (AVRT) drew the conclusion from this that the people did not want new "so-called interest protection organs" to be formed, nor do they want unions. The unions filed suit with the Capital Labor Affairs Court against the rules under which the elections were executed. The lawsuit has yet to go before a judge, but the company has designated August 26 as the date for the second round of Industrial Council elections.

Membership Petition

The representatives of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) will be visiting LIGA between October 25 and 27. During this visit, the international organ will make a decision as to LIGA's possible membership.

Public Service Meeting

On September 23 and 24, Public Service International held a meeting in the Budapest offices of the international Labor Organization. The Secretary General of the organization, Hans Engelbert, present, as Deputy Secretary general Alan Leather and the representatives of numerous European unions. PSI would like to give unions the opportunity to observe its work. On September 24, LIGA's public employee sector delegates participate in the loose discussion which serve to offer mutual information.

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