

TODAY ABROAD

by Joseph Clark

About the Workers Councils in Hungary

PERHAPS the ultimate solution of the Hungarian crisis will depend on a recognition of the Workers Councils as the most vital force in that shattered land. In this respect the address by Yugoslavia's Vice President, Edward Kardelj to his country's National Assembly on Dec. 7 may be helpful in shedding additional light on the Hungarian events.

Kardelj argues that the need for changes in the political system is the big issue before Hungary. He rejects the theory "that a party or state can build socialism without the workingclass or even against the latter's will." Kardelj then adds:

"In fact the Hungarian workingclass has nevertheless acted—although rather unconsciously—in a socialist manner. . . . As regards the concept of government, democracy and political and party relations it was, it is true, greatly under the influence of various petty-bourgeois and abstract liberal phrases. However, at the same time, it defended energetically the social ownership over the means of production. Moreover, by establishing workers councils, it has further developed this achievement, transforming it from a form of state ownership into a consistent form of social ownership, i.e. ownership under the direct democratic management of the community of producers. It is characteristic also that the working masses have declared themselves in favor of single workers councils and of their unication towards the top, in order to be thus in a position to exercise direct influence upon the central state authorities. This very fact shows that the working class of Hungary has, in spite of a certain unconscious confusion

of ideas, actually found the right road to power."

IT WAS this aspect of the Workers Council development which apparently alarmed the Kadar government and the Soviet authorities in Hungary. They banned district and city-wide councils while legalizing the factory councils on which they were based. But the district and city councils continue to exist and even continue to negotiate with representatives of the Kadar government.

Kardelj does not view the second Soviet intervention as the origin of the "sin" in Hungary but as its consequence. The fate of socialism, he feels is not being decided by taking stands for or against Soviet intervention. As he sees it:

"The main and decisive question actually lies in another direction, namely, how was it at all possible that after 11 years of a government that had pledged itself to socialism, in a relatively developed country with a powerful economic basis and a strong workingclass (he obviously means this in comparison with pre-war Yugoslavia—J. C.) an armed uprising of the same class would take place, and how could this revolt provoke the intervention of another socialist state? No matter whether this process is called a revolution or a counter-revolution, the fact remains that the workingclass had risen against a government which was proclaiming itself socialist, and that the majority of the workingclass had taken part in the uprising, because if that had not been the case, the uprising would have come to nothing."

THEREFORE KARDELJ

stresses the need of radical changes in the Hungarian political system. He says the Yugoslavs supported the Kadar government in expectation that it would establish closer relations with the workingclass, i.e. "with the workers councils, as well as other genuine democratic and socialist trends in Hungary, including such elements from the former government of Imre Nagy."

Such a course, Kardelj thinks, "could become the starting point for a socialist democratic concentration, based primarily on the workers councils." It could save socialism "and ensure conditions for the withdrawal of Soviet troops, as well as for friendly relations with the Soviet Union."

Kardelj made this speech just before the Kadar government outlawed the Workers Councils. But he already records the fear with which the Hungarian government reacted to the councils. He also notes "the violation of the Yugoslav-Hungarian agreement on the cessation of asylum for the group of Imre Nagy and the deportation of this group to Romania." Kardelj warns that from a continuation of such trends "ordinary bourgeois nationalism might emerge as the main ideological driving force, and the masses of workers themselves might be pushed more to the right."

Kardelj thinks the most surprising thing in Hungary is that "the Communists were afraid of the Workers Councils."

"Lenin had the courage," Kardelj recalls, "to voice the slogan 'All power to the Soviets,' although the Bolsheviks were not in the majority in the Soviets. However, as a Marxist, Lenin rightly expected that the working masses, once they became responsible for power, must act in their own interests, that is in a Socialist way."