THE HUNGARIAN UPRISING
By Malcolm Fraser, Member for Wannon.

Late last month a Special Committee appointed by the United Nations to examine the causes and happenings during the Hungarian revolution made its report. Australia, Denmark, Ceylon, Tunisia and Uruguay composed the Committee, all of them small powers - a fair cross section from the members of the United Nations.

We should all take some notice of the report because it reveals all too clearly the deceit of communism and the tragedy of the Nations of Eastern Europe which are dominated by Russia.

This talk is devoted to the factual findings of the United Nations Special Committee. Witnesses have given evidence of the bitter discontent and low living standards at present in Hungary. As one witness put it "all production went to Russia and we received in return only Russian trained politicians and Russian troops. No one dared to criticise the Government either in public or among friends for fear that the Security police or the Communist Party might hear of it."

Religious worship was discouraged. The Trade Unions, which in Australia protect and defend the interests of their members, in Hungary were little more than agents for the Communist Government. Their function was to communicate and enforce the Government's instructions and decrees and their Union officials were "alert to detect any member who injudiciously criticised working conditions or any Government order relating thereto." There was no organisation in Hungary to faithfully represent the workers to safeguard their rights and their interests. An Australian trade unionist used to the protection and support his Union gives him would not have recognised the same institutions in Hungary.

The first decision to hold a demonstration was made by University students who asked the workers to join them. Certain demands were read out which included the withdrawal of Russian troops, independence for Hungary, abolition of work norms in factories, freedom of religion in practice and transfer of Uranium mines in Hungary from Russian control to Hungarian control. There was no violence. The demonstrators carried no arms.
On the 23rd October a crowd began shouting for permission to broadcast their demands. It was at this time that the Secret police began shooting with a machine gun from inside the building. The crowd then went to a nearby Hungarian Army Barracks to obtain arms. The conclusion from all the evidence was inescapable that the Hungarian Army was on the side of the revolution even the Russian troops that had been stationed in Hungary were sympathetic to the revolution as they knew it was a genuine workers uprising stemming from discontent and poverty.

The report dismissed even a remote possibility of any outside influence organising the revolution and said that it was completely unplanned and spontaneous stemming from the conditions of the time.

After the 23rd October there was a general strike and then with a new Government workers were allowed to elect workers' committees in their particular factories or shops. They acted quickly on this permission dismissing the existing management staff. The general strike was to have ended on the 5th November after workers had organised themselves and established their own committees. In this period also political prisoners were released and non-communist newspapers re-appeared. On the 4th November the Russian tanks returned in force and it became clear that their efforts for freedom were doomed to failure. The Russians were slow in acting and in suppressing the revolution because their troops in Hungary were unreliable. There were even isolated instances where they gave their equipment to the Hungarians and joined in fighting the Secret Police. However, the troops who came in from the outside were of a different stamp. They set about the task of suppressing the uprising with ruthlessness, speed and efficiency.

After that date all the earlier freedom gained in the revolution was quickly abolished and "since the 4th November there has been no evidence of popular support for Mr. Kadar's Government." Mr. Kadar has proceeded, the report continues, "to destroy the power of the workers step by step. Strong repressive measures have been
introduced and general elections have been postponed for two years. He refuses in the present circumstances to discuss the withdrawal of Soviet troops. Only a small fraction of the 190,000 Hungarians who fled the country have accepted the invitation to return."

Many of the refugees have come to find safety and freedom in British Commonwealth countries, especially in Canada and in Australia.

To many of these people, freedom and the right to speak up for themselves are their most important possessions. We who take these things for granted seem to forget just how important they are. When we hear the Communists talking of peace and equality we should remember Hungary. We must never allow ourselves to be persuaded by words. We can only be convinced by peaceful actions of the right kind. Actions which have just not been present in recent years from Communist countries.

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